

Podcast Transcript

Special Presentation by Canada's Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen

Thank you very much for that very kind and generous welcome. It is an honour to represent the country of Canada and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on this visit here to Australia and New Zealand and to be at the University of New South Wales. I have already met a Canadian who is making amazing contributions to the institution.

The comment that you ended the introduction with is something that I truly believe in. My story is amazing not because of its own value, but because it's so common in Canada. You see many, many newcomers who have really added to the tapestry and richness of Canadian society, whether it is creating jobs or adding to the social and cultural variety of our society and, I think, of our diversity. It is a powerful country that is open to opening doors to people who are kind enough to share their talents with us and giving them an opportunity to restart their lives. That's because we are engaged in a very national reconciliation process with the indigenous peoples of Canada. The rest of Canada is inhabited by the descendants of Inuits, or Inuits themselves. So, Canadians deeply understand the positive role that immigrants and immigration has had on Canadian society.

If you look at the modern history of Canada, it is very difficult to separate that history from the history of immigration reform. So, you see waves and waves of people who come to our shores either in search of protection from persecution and you also see people who have come for economic opportunity, and in both those cases, you see the footprint that they have left in many parts of our country. And we haven't always gotten it right. Despite the really positive credibility that we have now with respect to welcoming others, we haven't always gotten it right. In the 1800s, there was a ship of people who were fleeing British India who landed in British Columbia in western Canada and they were fleeing the first War of Independence in India and the Canadian authorities sent them back, many to their deaths. And in 1939 we had the MS St Louis, which was a ship that came to Canada full of Jewish Refugees from Europe, fleeing Nazi Germany, and they were also turned back and not all, but many, died in the Holocaust.

So, those lessons have stayed with Canadian policymakers, in terms of the responses that we have had over the years to those seeking protection from persecution. Occasionally there are leaders in Canada that forget that history and who demand that the government of Canada suspend our Charter of Rights and the protections that we have in terms of due process of claiming asylum, for example. Lucky for us, we have held firm on the notion that we can both apply Canadian law, to make sure that we respect Canadian law and process

everyone fairly and equally, make sure that we can protect the safety and security of Canadians, while at the same time staying true to our commitment to the Geneva Convention and other commitments that Canada has signed to make sure that people who are fleeing persecution and who claim asylum in our country, at least have the opportunity to be given a fair hearing, so that they can then make their case. If they then are able to establish in front of an independent body that they deserve refugee protection, then they get to stay.

In addition to that, as has been mentioned, we have a very long-standing government resettlement program for refugees that has been ongoing for many years and we usually rely on the UNHCR to refer cases to us. However, we still go through the security and health screenings that are necessary before resettling those individuals to Canada. The private sponsorship program is on top of that, it doesn't take away from those numbers, it's an additional program that enables an outlet for the generosity of Canadians to be able to participate in the sponsorship of a refugee, a single refugee or a refugee family. That program really came about as a reaction to the Vietnamese boat crisis in the 1970s, and since then Canada has been able to resettle an additional 288,000 refugees through the private sponsorship program.

This program is transformative not just for the refugees themselves but also for the sponsors who sponsor a refugee family. They find that for the most part the experience is very transformative. Although legally they are only able to sponsor that individual for one year, the relationships that they form usually last much longer than that. Again, although legally only the sponsors are able to take care of them, we found that their neighbours and friends also take part in that experience and embrace these refugees and we find that those sponsors turn around after one year and become some of the biggest champions for refugees. Refugees are no longer an abstract, they are real people that have become essentially part of their family. My predecessor [as] the Minister of Refugees and Citizenship used to say that he was the only immigration minister in the whole world that couldn't bring enough refugees to satisfy the Canadian demand for refugee sponsorship. So, it shows the impact that the private sponsorship program has had on Canadians, because it wasn't limited to small and medium-sized cities and large cities, it spanned over to small and remote communities as well.

The Syrian example is a good example, because it couldn't have been done only by the government. The government had promised, Prime Minister Trudeau had promised, that if we were elected, we could bring 25,000 refugees. But by the end of that term period, we were able to bring 40,000. So, the 15,000 in addition to the 25,000 [were] privately sponsored and that number is now up to 50,000. So, a total of 50,000 Syrian refugees have been brought to Canada from November 4, 2015, to now. But during that time period, the promise was to bring 25,000 refugees from November 4, 2015 to February 29, 2016. And my

predecessor joked, he said, 'You know, I'm glad it's a leap year because we could probably end up using that extra day to get to the target.' He jokingly said that, but, actually, when February 29 came around is actually when the last flight came in, the last flight to fulfil the government promise. So, we ended up actually needing that extra day.

The second reason why Canada has been I think successful in terms of the integration of newcomers is by not just talking about it. One of the times you will hear leaders talking about integration, 'Why are these people not integrated?', 'These newcomers don't want to integrate,' 'These people are different from us', and so on and so forth. Well, here is the simple truth: integration is a two-way street. Yes, newcomers have to integrate into their new society but the government and citizens have to invest, they have to be serious about it. You can't demand the integration of newcomers, and learn the language and do all this and that, if you're not willing to provide them with the opportunities to do so. I always use an example of a European country that was complaining, this one mayor was complaining about the fact that this one community in the city was simply not integrating when in fact at the same time of 15 years, the same minister of government was denying this religious minority the opportunity to have their own senator. So how can you talk about integration when you're not offering the opportunity to feel a part of the society and being welcome?

The other secret to the Canadian example, and I think it's true for many countries including Australia: We assume that all permanent newcomers to Canada, whether they're coming into the family integration class, or the refugee class or the economic class, that they will eventually become citizens. And that's really important, because in other parts of the world that's not true. You could be a resident for three generations with your family in some parts of the world and you will never become a citizen. Now, that does a lot for your sense of belonging and your sense of attachment.

So, in Canada we view that citizenship is the last but important step to true integration. Yes, some people choose not to take that final step due to circumstances based on their other country of citizenship, as they feel that if they take that final step they will lose the passport of that other country, but they are personal considerations. The majority of the newcomers, 85 per cent of the newcomers to Canada choose to take that final step toward integration; 93 per cent of newcomers, acquire French or English fluency very quickly. Again, why is that? It's because we invest. Since we have gotten into government we have increased the spending on settlement and integration by 30 per cent. So, this year, for 2018/2019, we will invest over a billion dollars in settlement and integration services. These are language training, job support, orientation programs and community programs to build social cohesion. So, the outcomes that people see and say, 'Woah, we really like this, we are really envious of the integration in Canada.' It doesn't happen overnight, you need to invest. And while those investments can be quite costly. They pay for themselves 10 times over. The

faster you can enable a newcomer to restart their life, the faster they will be able to contribute to Canada, and that is the thinking behind it.

The second reason for the openness to immigration is because of the economic benefits. In 1972, we had almost seven working Canadians supporting each retiree, 7-1 in 1972. By 2012 that ratio had dropped 4-1, so by 2012, four working Canadians were supporting each retiree. If we are not ambitious in Canada in terms of raising the numbers continuously, by 2035, which is not that far away, that ratio will come down to 2-1. We will only have two working Canadians supporting each retiree. And I ask you, how much do you know about Canada's generous social programs? How will we maintain our health care system? Our pension plan, the Canadian public pension plan? Our infrastructure programs? Our other generous social programs? We are thinking and considering a national care program to help seniors and others with the cost of litigation. How will we do that with a ratio of 2-1. So, one of the ways to address that gap, it's not the only way but one of the ways, is to be ambitious with immigration and realise that immigration is not just about addressing market shortages and skill shortages and providing protection to those who seek it, but also to address our own demographic challenges in Canada, and that ratio is part of that.

In some parts of Canada, the demographic challenge is already there, it is very acute in eastern Canada. For every 100 workers that join the workforce we have 125 that retire out of the workforce. Now, how will we address that gap of 25? The population is five years older than the rest of Canada. The eastern Canadians in general are facing a lot of challenges. Not so much in attracting immigrants but keeping them. So, we have embarked on a very creative program called the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program, it's a three-year pilot and it is meant to really address that. To give eastern Canada more numbers and also to welcome retention. So, the key there is to have employers lead the settlement and integration process, so that they think not only of the skilled immigrant but also of their family. So, when you invite the skilled immigrant to come to eastern Canada and then you help the spouse start a business or get a second job and you enrol the kids in school, it is then very unlikely that the skilled immigrant will move to Toronto, Vancouver or other places, which is usually what happens.

The second big play we are making is on talent. We have introduced a Global Skills Strategy, which is attracting a lot of highly talented people from other parts of the world. You see individuals making decisions to move to Canada from the United States simply because of our immigration strategy. They're saying, 'We feel more welcome in Canada, we will get permanency, whereas in the United States we will continue on a visa system. At least there is a pathway to citizenship, so I would rather move there.' You're seeing the people making decisions based on their children and their families feeling more accepted and welcome. Researchers and innovators are taking a pay-cut to move from other parts of the world where immigrants and newcomers are less accepted to come to Canada because they feel

that the environment and the community is more accepting. They are thinking about the future and they are choosing Canada because of that immigration system. So, we view that as an immigration advantage, we view it as a competitive advantage in a world where mobile talent is more mobile than ever before. The more welcoming you are, the more talent you are able to receive. So, as a result of the Global Skills Strategy, since last June to now we have attracted 10,000 highly skilled individuals into Canada and who have chosen to lend us their skills and benefit Canadian business and our economy.

Coming back to the humanitarian aspect of things. From time to time we don't just rely on the UNHCR to refer cases, we also have public policies that respond to immediate and urgent means. So, for example the parliament of Canada in 2016 passed a resolution asking the government of Canada to respond to the need to provide protection to the survivors of ISIS atrocities, mainly women and young girls, mainly in the Yazidi community but also for other minorities as well in Northern Iraq. So, we responded with a special program where we literally airlifted survivors of the atrocities. But we did it in a very paced manner. We wanted to make sure that these individuals, who had survived unimaginable trauma, had the right support, had the right psychological and physical resources around when they landed in Canada. So, we paced our arrivals and spread them across the country to make sure that each landing would correspond with a community that had the right types of services to be able to transform the lives of these individuals to be able to recover and restart their lives.

I think that's the program that I am most proud of because again, it speaks to Canada's willingness to stand up in today's global atmosphere and to provide protection to the most vulnerable people and invest money and political capital and go to great lengths. I mean, our staff had to operate in Iraq at a time where the security situation was very poor around Mosul and other places. But we did it, and we did it very well and now they are in Canada. The government commitment was to provide protection to around 1,300 people. But there is also the Private Sponsorship Program in which we have been encouraging private sponsors and organisations to consider survivors of diaspora, and we expedite those applications and that's ongoing. In terms of the commitment that we made to parliament, that promise has been kept and in very difficult conditions. At one point in Northern Iraq the situation was so bad that the flights were cancelled, so we had to regroup and figure out how to get them out. But thankfully those people are now here, they are now in Canada, and I have visited many communities across the country and they are doing very well. They are supported by members of the diaspora but also members of the larger community.

I will come back to the private sponsorship program because it also had an international component. The challenge now is to respond to the largest refugee movement since the Second World War. The need, and the desire for refugee protection is very high. And the challenge is now how to respond to that. In the case of many industrialised countries and

the resettlement that they showcase, it's a drop in the bucket, it doesn't really address the need based on the numbers. So, what more can countries do? If they're not willing to massively increase their resettlement numbers, which I know in many countries is just not feasible, what more can we do? Well, one of the things is to help the countries in the region. The vast majority of refugees do not want to resettle in a far-away place. Contrary to popular opinion, refugees would like to return home. If that's not possible, they would prefer to stay in the region close by. Because they have that hope that they will go back to their home country. The chances of that happening are easier and higher if you are in the region than if you opt for resettlement. Very few opt for resettlement.

The Syrian example is a good one. The conflict started in 2011. You didn't really see an exodus to Europe until 2015. So, for the first four years they were in the region. They were hoping that things would get better. It's when they started losing hope, around the five-year mark, is when they started heading to Europe. But even then, the numbers who have fled to other parts of the world versus the ones who have stayed in the Middle East, you can't compare them, and the same goes for African refugees. So, the question becomes how can we industrialised countries, how can we better help countries in the region? Take the place of Jordan, a country of 9 million people already short of water and other resources, have agreed to take in 1.3 million Syrian refugees and hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees. Now, that kind of volume coming into Jordan challenges the resiliency of Jordan. It's incumbent on us to make sure that Jordan made the right decision to provide protection to those seeking protection, and this is consistent with our values.

The least we can do is make sure that Jordan remains resilient in their approach. One of the ways that we have been able to do that, I think we have increasingly seen, an overlap between refugee policy and international development policy. So, in the case of Jordan, for example, Jordan is known for a very healthy and long-standing textile industry. So, Jordan reached an agreement with the EU and the United States, I believe, Canada is involved as well, at least in the case of the EU, certain Jordanian textile factories hire a minimum percentage of refugees and products from only those factories will have preferential market access to the EU market. Now, that changes the mindset, because first of all it creates jobs for Jordanians and the refugees. Secondly, it changes the view of Jordanians. If any of them viewed refugees as a burden, that changes it, they start to see refugees as an ally in their own development. Because of these refugees and because of their generosity, they are getting market access for their products. And it's much, much less expensive for Western countries to do that, to help the Jordanians.

Uganda is another country that is amazingly open-minded. I was there, less than three months ago, whereby they don't put people in camps, they offer you land to farm and be self-sufficient. At the same time, there is freedom of movement for refugees. They give refugees work permits, they are very progressive. For a country that has little in terms of budgetary room to do so, they are making that choice. Again, what can we do to help

countries like Uganda to succeed in achieving that policy and offer an alternative to putting people in camps for 30 years and wasting away their talent? One program that we should support, that offers a way out, is a program that I saw in Northwest Kenya, in a very remote part of Kenya that would normally not be developed any time soon. The Kenyan government for many years have integrated these refugees into the local community, offering them some sort of pathway to permanent residency and citizenship and what happened after a while is that the World Bank came with the UNCHR and other bodies and they did a study on the economic impact that this camp and their residents were having on the local community, just by being there. So, the camp residents were buying things, they were buying cell phones and things like that. The study, which was pretty detailed, showed the Kenyan government that this camp was injecting 62 million dollars a year. So, the Kenyans were awed by this, they thought this was great. So, they were encouraged by these results to be more flexible and have more movement and so on.

So, the UNCHR did a study on this. Ten per cent of refugee camp residents will never leave the camp, [they] have their own limitations or they are heads of households who are looking after the welfare of a number of children so they are limited in terms of their mobility. But the UNCHR found that 90 per cent of camp residents can be transitioned out of the camp, so the first 10 per cent are transitioned out of the camp, these are the most educated people, who after the camp is established the UNCHR immediately hires them to become translators, registration folks, and [to] do biometrics and so on. So, 10 per cent make a fast transition. But the remaining 90 per cent of them can be transitioned out with a little bit of help in two streams. They offered two streams to the refugees: one is vocational training in a trade and that is your ticket out or a business, so you get a little bit of money, about \$500 to start a business, a small shop that sells food. They also re-fund the UNCHR food ration system so instead of getting really bad food that is not nutritious and it costs a lot of money because there is a lot of leakage, they move to a card system where you would get some money and you would actually go out into the community and buy what you want. And the people selling the food would be the refugees who got that start-up money. And the ones who got the vocational training, they were encouraged to move out of the camp and build their own homes outside in a settlement 10 km away.

Now this was great for the Kenyan government because the local community is very nomadic, they didn't settle and the Kenyan government had been trying for many years to encourage that community to enrol their children in school and build permanent homes and so on. So, when the UNCHR built schools there, half of the places would be for local children, half the places would be for refugees. And the new settlement that was built was really built for refugees more than the local population and the local population would pay the refugees who were trained, to build them homes. So, you have this new city that is emerging in the middle of nowhere, with these businesses, with these services and these business opportunities. We met people there who a year ago were in the camp, who are

now successfully in businesses outside of the camp. So that's a model that's fantastic, because they are now active members of the Kenyan community, they have legal status in Kenya, the Kenyan government is happy because there is economic activity there and job creation.

We are happy because we don't have to support 90 per cent of the refugees. It's cheaper for the Canadian government to support that program. You can now take 90 per cent of the money you are spending there and spend it on refugees. So that's the kind of thinking we have to think about. Many of these countries are closing their borders to refugees and saying, 'Well no we don't want refugees and we don't want this and we don't want these numbers.' Well, fine, help people on the ground, help people in the region. It's less costly, maybe it's less costly politically as well, and it serves the purpose of giving back to people who have lost so much during their refugee experience.

The camp model does not work. I have seen people who have been there for three generations. They are wasting away, they can't work, they don't have any opportunity for their creativity, for their entrepreneurial spirit. That's not the way to go. It is very expensive to maintain, and it breeds a lot of resentment for the local community as well because those camps use local resources, people chop wood for fire and so on. So that's not the way to go, and I think that we have to increasingly look at other ways and other policies and leverage that towards an advantageous refugee policy.

One of the ways in which Canada is doing this is through, and this is a potential that we could certainly explore, is the G7 countries met in Canada this year in Quebec and they raised 3.8 billion dollars for girls' education. They raised the money but they haven't decided which girls are going to be educated with that money so obviously there could be a good case to be made to harness some of that money on behalf of females and young girls who are in refugee situations. We know that in Canada we have oriented our whole development policy to focus on women and young girls. We know that when conflicts happen, women are disproportionately victimised, they are the ones that suffer disproportionately from violence, hunger disease and from everything else. So, we are focussing on that. The 3.8 billion dollars, our share of that is about 400 million dollars. We are talking about a good amount of money that can be put to use.

The second part of that is to target the private sector, and this is where I appeal to you. I appeal to you to think about this. Many, many private sector companies can include refugees in their manufacturing process or in their value chains. There is absolutely no reason not to do that. And it's not an act of charity, it actually makes business more profitable. There was a study done in the United States that companies that hire refugees have less turnover, have more company loyalty, they have a better social brand and overall made 11 per cent more money than the next company. So, there's a business case to be

made here and with the businesses that have done that, the results have been nothing but positive. This is a really significant way to help refugees because you're not giving refugees money, you are giving them a job and they are working and supporting themselves. I know that Ikea has a pilot program with Ethiopia and Jordan. But there is a push to continue to do this and I believe that Australian private companies can be a part of this. So, we have to think beyond the NGO sector, and that's a key part of this, we have to think beyond government and we have to think within government, how should we utilise international development policy but also the private sector?

Last but not least, I'll end by saying that the case for diversity is that diversity is a source of strength. When you have international students in a classroom they enrich that classroom. They bring different perspectives, they bring different experiences and they add to the thought process of that classroom in a way that wouldn't happen if you had all the same kind of students in that classroom. You could say that the more diverse that countries are, the more they are open to different perspectives but also to connections to other parts of the world. One of the things that we understand in Canada is that it is a source of strength. In a country with 37 million people, that needs to trade with other countries so that we can maintain our standard of living, diversity enables us to do that. I think of the international student that came from China to study in my home town of Ontario. He studied at university and decided to stay and work in Canada and then started his own manufacturing company, then used his own social networks to export solar panels back to his home region in China. Now that is a part of the world, his particular region, the export market that he opened up, is a plus for Canada. He was able to bring jobs and prosperity for Canadians as a result of opening up that export market.

So, the case for diversity is clear: diversity should be seen as a source of strength, not as a threat. The experiences that we've had with it shows that immigration is an advantage when you are mobile coming to people in global atmosphere in which talent is very mobile. If I'm a talented individual and I try Country X and Country X is not as welcoming as Country Y, I'm going to go to Country Y and Country X is going to be the loser. Talent is more mobile than ever, investment is more mobile than ever. People want to go to where they're accepted and included, and I'll end by saying that Canada has decided that in a world where countries are closing their doors more than ever to talent, to skills, even to people who are seeking protection, we have taken the opposite approach and we have increased our numbers and we are saying yes to people who have come to share their skills with us. We also have a space in our hearts and in our homes for those who are seeking protection. As one of my good friends says, 'Diversity is a fact, we can't get away from it, but inclusion is a choice', and we have decided to be inclusive.

Thank you very much.

Question: Australia launched an entrepreneurship visa two years ago and it's been so strictly managed that only one person applied for it in its first 12 months. I work with the G20 Young Entrepreneur alliance and we have a partner in Canada, Futurepreneur, that we work closely with and we have been trying to advocate to the Australian government to ease up the requirements for that so that we can attract more migrant entrepreneurs to try and live out that example that you shared yourself at the end of your talk there. I was just wondering if you could share the past, present and future approach in Canada of the pathway of attracting migrant entrepreneurs.

Minister Hussen: We used to have an investor program in the past and it was discontinued because it was just putting money in a bank account and the economic activity that was promised did not happen. So, the government discontinued that. I am not personally opposed to it, I have asked the proponents of that program to make their case to me but I haven't seen anything convincing so far. In terms of the entrepreneurship, there are two ways to come to Canada through that. One way is a small category in the Canadian immigration system and it is called the self-employed category. So, if you run a very thriving business and you're self-employed, you can apply through that system. The other one is a start-up visa program which is a permanent residency stream for promising start-ups. So, any promising start-up in the world that we identify through referrals from the industry, they can come to Canada and we will give permanent residency to the owner, their family as well as the workers. The idea is to go from the 5-million-dollar company to the 100-million-dollar company so we are thinking that you would come and then scale up in Canada. So those are the two streams.

Question: Hi Minister, my name is Ezra and I'm from Settlement Services International here in Sydney. I can't tell you how inspirational your speech was as a long-standing activist. I just wanted to ask you about your thinking about population policy. So, in Australia in the last couple of weeks, especially with heightened tension on taking a broader approach to population, what seems to happen is that immigration seems to become a central point to that conversation rather than having a broader conversation. So, we are really interested to see the way that Canada is looking at immigration and framing population as part of that conversation.

Minister Hussen: The challenges we face in terms of demographics are very similar in many industrialised countries. It's low birth rates, high-aging population and an unwillingness by the local population to do some of the work in some of the sectors. When you combine all these factors, especially in some parts of our countries, you really start to see a desire for people and I believe that the subjective feelings around immigration sometimes get in the way of the objective fact that we need people to come and address these gaps. That's where I think leadership makes a difference, and at that point, if you are a leader, you have two choices. You can either play up to the anxieties of the people and take advantage of

their fear to make a play to get into office, or you can take the harder route and make the case for immigration. Make the case for the advantages of immigration, of the needs and also really encourage the employers to come out of the shadows and really make that case with you.

Employers will quietly come to you and say, 'Look I really need workers.' But they aren't going out there publicly and saying that. I recently heard that in Canada we need 50,000 truck drivers. 50,000, just in that industry. You don't hear the Canadian Truckers Association coming up and saying we need immigration because we are short 50,000. You know, it shouldn't just be government that are saying these things, it should be the private sector and the public sector and everyone else making the case. Because this is real. The worst thing you do with respect to this is to create anxiety among people and create fear toward newcomer. You know Prime Minister Trudeau has always said that fear doesn't create a job.

Question: Sean Cameron from Talent Beyond Boundaries and we work in Canada and here joining up the private sector in destination countries like Australia and Canada with skilled refugees who are still located in temporary locations like Jordan and Lebanon. One of the problems in my mind is that an employer meets a candidate and says, 'Yeah, this is the guy for me. I would like to hire this person', and the next question is, 'Well, when can I get them?' If you say three-to-six months, that's okay. If you say 12 to 18 months, that's not good. And I just wonder what your ideas are on that.

Minister Hussen: Under the Canadian constitution, you cannot force someone, even a newcomer, to live in a particular part of Canada. It is just not legally possible. But what you can do is that you can incentivise. Under the system, in Atlantic Canada [Program] for example, we have introduced a new program. We say look, it normally takes 12 months or more to process your case for [inaudible], which is a program, we give each and every Canadian province and territory an allocated number of spaces, that they can use in any way they want every year. So, if a particular province gets 2000 a year they can use all 2000 for truck drivers or nurses, it's really up to them. That process normally takes 12 months or more but we can tell the same person, 'Hey, why don't you join the Atlantic Program in Canada because the process is faster, it's only 6 months.' And they get a break on the [inaudible] because the needs in that province are more acute than in the rest of Canada.

One of the things I am thinking about, it's still early days but it's an immigration pilot program that really addresses the needs of rural Canada to harness immigration because a lot of times they lose out to the big cities. But it has a second objective to it. I believe that the more rural Canada benefits from immigration, the more support they will have for immigration and that's what the Syrian refugee initiative did, because the numbers were so big that they were sent over to smaller communities. Some of the most ardent people who are demanding more for these smaller communities because they saw all of the benefits in

the schools that were about to be closed that were suddenly thriving with the noises of children through the influx of these newly arrived refugees. And they're doing very well. The cohort of Syrian refugees, because of our investment in extra language spaces and so on. The trajectory is similar to previous waves of refugees. When people tell you that refugees don't make it, they don't bring any skills, that's not true. In fact, there was a refugee family, the Haddas, in eastern Canada – they resettled as refugees in less than a year. They were chocolatiers in Syria and they restarted their business and in the first year they hired a 100 Canadians, now they have expanded to many parts of the country. It's a very unique story and you see a lot of that. I went to a soap manufacturing facility run by Syrian refugees who used to be soap makers in Syria, and you see this all the time. I remember sitting at a UN panel in New York and there was European minister who said, 'You Canadians don't get it, refugees have no skills in anything!' And I was so embarrassed. In Canada, we think very differently.

Question: My name is Jordan and I'm from the Human Rights Law Centre. I am just wondering what the Canadian approach is to refugees handling [inaudible]?

Minister Hussen: There is a one-year window. First of all, for the resettled refugees, once you have been selected to come to Canada, you obviously listed your dependents, so they come with you. If you're disconnected and you have listed them, you can sponsor them in a one-year window while you're still a resettled refugee. If you're an asylum seeker you also have a one-year window, you can again, sponsor them after you become a permanent resident or after you become a dual citizen.

Question: Hi Minister, I'm actually Canadian and I am an international student here. Every time I tell someone that I'm Canadian they tell me how lucky I am, how they love Justin Trudeau and it is flattering, and it is a source of pride. But at the same time, I know our country isn't perfect, particularly concerning the global shift toward anti-immigration in which Canada hasn't been spared. Our premier of Ontario was partly elected on an anti-immigration platform. So, what can Canadians, or just in general, how can we change our cultural attitudes toward that?

Minister Hussen: Very good, that's a very good point. We are not immune to this anti-immigration sentiment. What we've done is that we have responded by doubling down on the numbers, increasing the numbers, making the case. I recently launched a campaign called, *Why Immigration Matters*, across the country. For a long time in Canada we have emphasised why, as a society, we should be welcoming to newcomers, what adjustments we need to make to do this or that. But we haven't articulated frequently enough what newcomers do to Canada; how they revitalise, how they rejuvenate economies and so on. So, this campaign is about telling the second part. I've been travelling across Canada, and

many others have been doing that, to spread that message so that Canadians really understand how critical it is that we have immigration.

So, the private sponsorship program is about increasing the resettlement numbers, and one of the ways that Canada is contributing to the shortage of the resettlement numbers is to export the PSR program to other countries. So, now the UK has a private sponsorship program, we worked with the officials and there was a pilot program that now has become permanent. The Germans have a program now, modelled on the Canadian program. The New Zealanders have a pilot program for families that they are trying it out. I know Australia is looking at this as well and three South American countries are looking at it as well. This is the Canadian solution to increasing resettlement numbers and we have also produced a "How To" guide to society to take this up.

Question: Hi, my name is Nick and I'm a journalist with SBS news, that's one of the public media companies here in Australia. Just wondering do you have any observations of Australia's immigration policy, Australia's refugee policy and maybe some of our more controversial ones like our offshore processing. From an outside perspective and obviously your government has a different take on immigration compared to us, what's your take?

Minister Hussen: First of all, there's a lot of similarities. The express system, the entry-point system, we learnt that from Australia. All the economic programs, the family reunification, we always exchange information. I'm not going to comment on the asylum policies of Australia because we have different geographies and different challenges and you know in Canada, we have three oceans, and the United States border. We haven't faced the same challenges as some European countries have over the years. So, last year we saw an increase in asylum seekers coming through the US border, and this year, the numbers are down. But it is a challenge and the asylum system is experiencing pressure from the dramatic increase in volumes last year. It has resulted in some people on the right and the far-right to say that these people shouldn't be coming in and there's some noise there. But we have resisted that, and we have said, no, Canada will remain true to its international obligations against torture and persecution. We will at least give asylum seekers the chance to make their case, and if their case has no merit then they are removed from Canada. And that's the law.

Question: Hi, I am a student at UNSW. I just wanted to know what advice would you give to the younger generations as to how to resolve asylum seeker problems and refugee problems?

Answer: That's a tough one. The starting point has to be that refugees are as diverse as any of us. Refugees are not monolithic, so spreading the message that refugees are not passive recipients of aid, that they are active people, and, given the opportunity, they can succeed

like other migrants, is a really important point to make. That is why our settlement and integration program in Canada doesn't distinguish between refugee classes and economic classes; all newcomers can access them, we don't distinguish between them. They all have a contribution to make, the statistics prove that. Yes, refugees take longer to integrate because they have been through some difficulties.

I remember being interviewed by a German journalist and they said, 'When you're selecting refugees from camps, do you just pick the skilled ones or do you take everybody? What about the older ones, do you just leave them behind?' I said, 'No, they're refugees.' And he just kept asking me about this, he said, 'What about the disabled ones, do you leave them?' 'No, they're refugees.' So, we don't understand each other. For refugees, it's outside their control, they didn't choose to flee their country. Of course, they would prefer to be in their own community. One aspect of migration beyond refugees that I think is proven by the Canadian system is that we have some agreements with countries in the Northern Hemisphere to provide seasonal workers and make a little of money over the summer in the cultural sector and then pump that money back into the community. One of the things that we have learnt from that program is that migrants, given legal pathways to work in our country, will not try to claim asylum because they have the choice. They will go and then they will come back. Some of these programs are 50 years old and we have never had someone overstay.

This global response to the global migration crisis, one of the things that we should consider, Australia and Canada and others, is to open up our borders a little bit more and give people legal pathways because when you do that they will not avail themselves to people smugglers and criminal gangs who take advantage and who prey on them. When you give people legal access they will not go down that route. I think that's one of the things you have to consider when you're thinking what you can do. Well, you can support Global Compact on Migration, because the Canadian contribution to that migration is to call for that, for more opening up of pathways, having common standards of treatment of migrants for example, child migrants and so on. And encouraging other countries to support that and sign that agreement in December.