

# Fair immigration for a stronger Canada

NDP **BACKGROUNDER**

**New Canadians** have always made our country stronger, and healthy immigration levels are more important than ever—to help build thriving communities and a 21st-century workforce to compete with the world’s best.

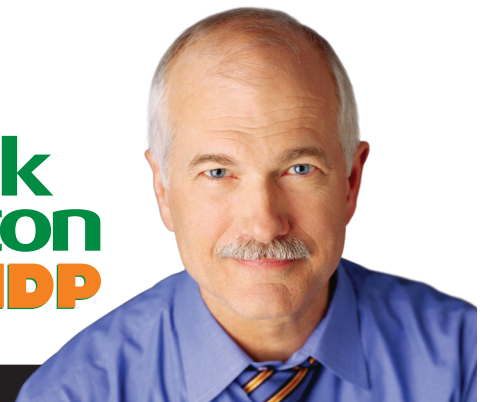
Yet with 900,000 hopeful immigrants stuck on waiting lists, Stephen Harper’s “solution” to backlogs is to give his cabinet arbitrary powers to screen people out. Instead of supporting family reunification and welcoming economic-class immigrants to match Canada’s long-term needs, Harper wants to prioritize short-term requests from big-business friends.

Successful immigrants face significant hardship once they do arrive, including poverty rates three times the national average. Though half of all new Canadians now enter Canada in the “skilled” class, talent doesn’t always mean fair opportunity. Half a million doctors, engineers and other professionals who live in Canada can’t contribute their skills here because their credentials aren’t recognized—and Stephen Harper’s inadequate response is another example of why you can’t trust him on issues that matter to you and your family.

For a stronger Canada, we need a Prime Minister who will fix our immigration system. A Prime Minister with the leadership to bring about change that will move us forward. Jack Layton will be that Prime Minister.

**Don’t let them tell you it can’t be done.**

**Jack  
Layton**  
NDP



## Stephen Harper can't be trusted.

- Instead of fixing Canada's backlogged immigration system, he slipped through legislation giving the Immigration Minister arbitrary powers to move people up—or off—the 900,000-application waiting list.
- He made immigration appeal backlogs even worse by failing to fill positions on the Immigration and Refugee Board—leaving a full third of the 156 seats vacant.
- After promising progress, he took mere baby steps on foreign credentials recognition, failed to launch the five-years-late Refugee Appeal Division, and offered no new hope for refugees facing 30-month waits to reunify with their families in Canada.
- From top to bottom, they have tried to remake Canada's immigration system as a source of low-wage, temporary labour for their friends in big business.

## Stephane Dion is not the change we need.

- By instructing Liberal MPs to skip key votes, he rubber-stamped Harper's legislation giving his own cabinet secretive, arbitrary powers to screen out newcomers and block family reunification.
- With Dion at the cabinet table, Liberal governments left Canada's immigration system buckling under 800,000 backlogged applications, five-year waits to sponsor aging parents for immigration, and no progress on credentials recognition.

## Jack Layton's New Democrats: Putting our families first.

This election, Jack Layton and his team of New Democrats have a plan for an improved immigration system—to ensure fairness, boost Canada's productivity, and ease family reunification. Already, Layton's team has led the way in Parliament.

- Launched the Creating Fair Opportunities plan to **recognize foreign professionals**—with national standards for credentials assessment; permanent training and bridging programs; and international reciprocity agreements.
- Led the campaign to end **punishing processing fees** imposed on refugees and on immigrant women and children escaping domestic violence.
- Tabled legislation to **speed up family reunification** by permitting any citizen or landed immigrant to sponsor for immigration one family member from outside the "family" classification.
- Pressured government to **reform the visa program** for fairness and efficiency—so visitors are not arbitrarily turned away overseas and families have proper visitation rights.
- Worked to ensure **fact-based appeals for refugee claimants** by demanding the launch of the Refugee Appeal Division that Parliament mandated in law in 2002—ignored by every government since.
- **Led the fight for human rights**—for instance, by passing a motion to grant refuge to US soldiers refusing to serve in Iraq; and opposing legislation extending the use of "security certificates" to detain immigrants without charge.