

Canadian Immigration Policy and the Toronto Lobby's 'Century Initiative' Project

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"The best way to resolve the opposition of both French and English groups [in Canada] is to swamp the French population under the steady stream of a methodically organized immigration, controlled initially, greeted on arrival and ensured of a privileged position in the colony." Lord Durham (John Lambton), (1792-1840), in 'Report on the Affairs of British North America', Jan. 31, 1839, (mainly written by Charles Buller)."

"Economic thinking about immigration is generally quite superficial. It is a fact that in different [rich] countries, reproducible national capital is on the order of four times yearly national income. As a result, when an additional immigrant worker arrives, in order to build the necessary infrastructure (housing, hospitals, schools, universities, infrastructure of all kinds, industrial facilities, etc.), additional savings equal to four times the annual salary of this worker will be needed. If this worker arrives with a wife and three children, the additional savings required will represent, depending on the case, ten to twenty times the annual salary of this worker, which obviously represents a very heavy burden for the economy to bear." Maurice Allais (1911-2010), 1988 Nobel Prize in economics, 2002.

"A people who is not master of its fate should limit its level of immigration to its capacity of integration. It is on this condition that cultural diversity can be positive. Otherwise, our roots and our identity are in danger." Rosaire Morin (1923-1999), Quebec journalist, 1966.

During the [last federal election campaign](#) in Canada, the issue of mass immigration for decades to come received virtually no attention.

Let us recall that during this election, the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) obtained 32.6 percent of the vote. Moreover, since the voter turnout was only 62.9 percent, the direct popular support the LPC received from all Canadian voters was only 20,3 percent.

Under such circumstances, it is difficult to arrive at the conclusion that the current Liberal minority government in Ottawa has received a clear and legitimate mandate from the people of Canada to substantially change the demographic composition of the country, for

decades to come. This would surely be the result if a mass immigration policy is implemented over the long run.

The Proposal of the Toronto lobby ‘Century Initiative’

Few people know that an obscure political organization, founded in 2011 by a small lobby of businessmen and journalists from Toronto, and bearing the name ‘[Century Initiative](#)’, has proposed to [triple the Canadian population](#) by the year 2100.

Indeed, the Toronto group ‘Century Initiative’ asserts that Canada—which counted 37 million inhabitants at the last census in 2021, and which normally, according to official projections, should have 53 million in the year 2100, (with a natural population growth rate and an average immigration policy)—should aim instead at having 100 million inhabitants by the year 2100, and not 53 million, and that the Canadian federal governments should, for this purpose, adopt a very aggressive immigration policy.

At this extreme migratory rate, already one of the highest in the world, if not the highest, Canada would no longer be recognizable, demographically speaking, in less than one generation or two. A major [population replacement](#) policy would have been implemented, almost on the sly, without public debate, without a general consultation and without in-depth studies on the probable consequences of such a project.

According to the plan designed by the Toronto lobby, within barely 78 years, Canada would have several mega urban agglomerations of more than ten million inhabitants, a bit like China today. Indeed, it is forecast that metropolitan Toronto would increase its population from 8.8 to 33.5 million inhabitants; that metropolitan Montreal would expand from 4.4 to 12.2 million inhabitants; that metropolitan Vancouver would grow from 3.3 to 11.9 million inhabitants, etc. Several Canadian megacities would each have about the same population as some medium-sized independent countries.

[N.B.: On October 23, 2016, one of the co-founders of the ‘Century Initiative’ lobby, Toronto businessman [Dominic Barton](#) (1962-), gave an [interview](#) to Global News in which he said: “It’s a big number [100 million]—*for me it’s more than an ambitious number*”... “*It would obviously change the country considerably. It’s a different vision... But I don’t think it’s madness!*”]. Is this a hoax?

Drawbacks and consequences of the ‘Century Initiative’ project

The implementation of the ‘Century Initiative’ project to triple the population of Canada in less than a century would result in numerous [drawbacks](#) and consequences, whether economic, political, social, cultural, linguistic, geographical or environmental.

Canada would suffer much more than a demographic shock. Indeed, besides profoundly upending the Canadian population, other impacts could be expected: more congestion more pollution, increased diseconomies of scale with the overload of public services in health, education and transportation facilities, more ghettoization, more language conflicts, more crime, more insecurity, etc.

Weaknesses in the main arguments of the ‘Century Initiative’ to triple the

Canadian population

The two main arguments advanced by the lobby behind the 'Century Initiative' to triple the population of Canada in less than a century are:

1. Increase the political importance of Canada on the international scene, by ensuring that Canada is among the 45 most populous countries on the planet, by the year 2100;
2. Increase Canada's economic growth rate. This would be attained mainly through bloating the number of domestic consumers and workers through a program of mass immigration.

A question begs to be asked: Is 'bigness for bigness sake' a relevant reason to transform the demographic picture of Canada? Indeed, such an argument essentially rests on the dubious idea that the level of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and its bulimic growth should be front and center in matters of public policy. What about the quality of life, living standards of the population and their happiness?

There are several countries with a large population in the world, but they are often relatively poor, and their demographic weight does not necessarily translate into an enviable position on the international scene.

Short of wishing to become a heavily militarized empire, Canada already plays a relatively large role internationally. However, over the years, this role has been somewhat diminished from what it was under the government of Lester B. Pearson (1897-1972), the winner of the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize. It is not because of Canada's lack of demographic weight, but because the Canadian politicians who succeeded Pearson have not measured up.

With free trade, Canada does not need a very large population

Since January 1, 1989, Canada is in a position of [free trade](#) with the United States. Moreover, that agreement was enlarged to include Mexico in 1994.

In such a commercial environment, Canadian producers are by no means limited to the Canadian market to sell their products. They are able to reach high output levels, which generate economies of scale, by exporting part of their production to the American market. Similarly, Canadian consumers have access to imports from the United States, which increases the diversity of supplies and stabilizes prices.

Living standards in the world are not linked to the demographic size of countries

A country's standard of living (GDP per capita) is hardly related to its demographic size. Rather, it would seem to be the opposite. This is clearly shown in the publications of the [United Nations Development Program](#) (UNDP).

The UNDP publishes the [Human Development Index](#) (HDI), a global index ranking of countries according to the standard of living and quality of life of their inhabitants. This index shows the level of qualitative development (life expectancy, education, standard of living) of each country.

Barring exceptions, it is inevitably the small or medium-sized countries that occupy the first

ranks, regarding the standard of living and the quality of life of the inhabitants, and not the most populated countries. In most cases, there is a negative relationship between the large demographic size of a country and their population's standard of living.

In 2019, for example, the top three countries for standard of living and quality of life all had less than 10 million inhabitants: Norway (pop. 5.3 million), Ireland (pop. 5.0 million) and Switzerland (pop. 8.5 million).

Arguments related to the aging of the population and labor shortages

The 'Century Initiative' invokes two other arguments in favor of very high immigration levels. One is supposedly to compensate for the aging of the population (caused by a drop in the fertility rate and an increase in life expectancy). Another is to prevent a possible labor shortage caused partly by the retirement of the 'baby-boomers', that is, the population cohort born between 1945 and 1965 in Canada.

It is true that these two phenomena will require adjustments and complementary policies in the short and medium term, that is to say until around the year 2050, when the 'baby-boomer' cohort will have largely disappeared, but not necessarily in the very long term, stretched over a whole century.

For example, studies show that immigration as such does not substantially modify the age structure of a population, essentially because the majority of immigrants arrive in the country as adults and the family reunification program contributes by bringing in immigrants who are already elderly (spouses, parents, grand-parents, etc.).

On this topic, the demographic studies of Benoît Dubreuil and Guillaume Marois ('[Le remède imaginaire](#)'/The imaginary remedy) indicate that the contribution of immigration on a large scale is not necessarily a panacea for rejuvenating a population, and that it can sometimes accentuate its aging problem. Other [studies](#) come to the same conclusions, namely that it is impossible to reverse the aging of populations through a high level of immigration of foreign adults and elderly dependents.

Means of mitigating the economic impact of an aging population through the year 2050

Other industrialized countries are facing the same problem of a demographic shock, and they resort to different means than relying on mass international immigration to deal with it.

For example, Japan is a prosperous industrial nation with an even older population than Canada, but it does not rely on international immigration to address the phenomenon.

Indeed, a country can instead put forward policies aimed at raising the fertility rate and the birth rate. Other policies may delay the retirement age in view of the increase in life expectancy. The same applies to measures to facilitate and increase the role of women in the labor force.

A government can encourage training in basic trades (computer specialists, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, technicians, etc.). In addition, as several companies are already doing, there is an opportunity to make greater use of robotics to perform labor-intensive tasks and raise productivity levels. And, ultimately, a selective immigration policy, based on identified economic needs, can rely on temporary foreign workers.

Regarding labor shortages, it is important to situate the issue in its overall economic context.

In theory, if a particular industry has a need for skilled workers, it is possible to adopt a temporary program to attract such workers from abroad. However, if one is talking about a generalized shortage of labor in the whole economy, which cannot be corrected through higher wages and training programs, that is quite another matter. On the one hand, if the rate of population growth naturally slows, consumption will also slow. The same would apply to some industries, which must adapt to a fluctuating demand or face increased competition with imports.

Moreover, as we saw earlier with the family reunification program, Canada imports many more consumers than workers with its mass immigration program. There is a danger of solving the problem of a labor shortage in one industry in particular, but simultaneously creating labor shortages in other industries, particularly in education and health sectors, in housing, in transport facilities and in private and public services and infrastructures in general. The economy could then face an endless spiral of labor shortages, with permanent tight labor markets that are created artificially and are inflated by a population that is growing too quickly through immigration.

Political, linguistic and cultural impact on French-Canadians and on French Quebec

The 'Century Initiative' lobby seems unconcerned about the consequences of its extreme immigration project on French-Canadians in general, and on their status as a political majority in Quebec. If the Canadian government were to continue on the path of a "Canada of 100 million inhabitants" by resorting to an ultra-mass immigration policy, the place of French-Canadians in Canada could only decline dramatically over the coming decades.

It is a fact that during the 20th century, Canadian immigration policy has resulted in a continuous [decline](#) in the demographic and political weight of the French-speaking population. In 1941, the first language of 29.3 percent of the population was French. However, by 2016, it had fallen to 21 percent, a drop of more than eight percentage points in 75 years. If the 'Century Initiative' project is implemented, it is possible to foresee a fall at least as important during the next 75 years. The result would be a situation that would threaten the very viability and durability of the French language in Canada in the next century.

As far as Quebec is concerned (one of the four founding provinces of Canada in 1867), its demographic weight in Canada as a whole could fall to as low as 10 percent by the end of the century. And in Quebec itself, francophones could find themselves in a minority on the territory of their ancestors, for the first time in 500 years.

If the federal government under J. Trudeau continues to implicitly endorse the 'Century Initiative' project, such an extreme immigration policy is bound to *de facto* "marginalize" French-speaking Quebec and to weaken the place of French-Canadians in Canada.

[N.B.: Regarding the daily scandal of '[Chemin Roxham](#)' (Roxham Road), the illegal border crossing in Quebec for tens of thousands of illegal immigrants and bogus refugees, with the help of professional smugglers—the only one of this nature in Canada—a solution must be found. In a democracy, if a government is unable to enforce the country's borders, its

primary responsibility is to resign.]

Conclusion

When all is taken into consideration, the Canadian federal government should publicly reject the project of 'Century Initiative'. If, instead, it persists in finding inspiration for its immigration policy in the proposal of the Toronto group, the Canadian population will have to deal with a planned immigration tsunami in the future.

In a true democracy, the adoption of such a long-term public policy should be submitted to the people for approval. However, neither the proposal of Canada's 100 million inhabitants by the 'Century Initiative' lobby, nor the extreme immigration policy inspired by it, have been the subject of public debates or have been submitted to the population, either in a referendum or in a general election. This is a major breach of democracy.

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This article was originally published on the author's blog site, [Dr. Rodrigue Tremblay](#).

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