

# Family Reunification? A Critical Analysis of Citizenship and Immigration Canada's 2013 Reforms to the Family Class

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## **Preface**

The family reunification project is part of the campaign titled “My Canada Includes All Families”, which involves a coalition of community-based organizations that include the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), the Ryerson Centre for Immigration and Settlement (RCIS), Metro Toronto Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic (MTCALC), and the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario. The purpose of the project is to oppose the 2013 proposal by Citizenship and Immigration Canada to continue reforms to the Family Class. The project argues that such changes undermine the value of family in Canada by redefining family reunification as being important only insofar as it maximizes economic outcomes. The project also asserts that in so doing, these changes disproportionately impact racialized communities by furthering the current socio-economic divide between racialized and non-racialized communities. To support these assertions, the family reunification project is pursuing the following actions:

- Collecting the stories of Canadians who came to Canada as immigrants and refugees to better understand the importance of families in their lives in Canada.
- Conducting research on the beneficial contributions of parents, grandparents, and other extended family members to the family unit and Canadian social fabric.
- Lobbying local MPs to oppose and block the implementation of CICs 2013 reforms (OCASI, 2013).

## **Abstract**

In 2011, significant reforms to Canada’s Family Class for immigration began with the freezing of applications for parent and grandparent sponsorship. In May 2013, a package of reforms to the Family Class was proposed, which would impose more stringent conditions for the sponsorship of parents, grandparents, and dependent children under the Family Class. In response, a coalition of civic stakeholders in Ontario mobilized through the “My Canada Includes All Families” campaign to lobby Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) to stop the implementation of these changes. This paper analyzes the package of reforms and explores the impacts that past and proposed reforms might have upon the value of the family unit in Canada. This paper aims to support the “My Canada Includes All Families” campaign by presenting practical research to illustrate the benefits that parents, grandparents, and family reunification have for the Canadian social fabric in terms of social capital.

*Key words:* policy reform, family reunification, social capital, economic rationale, racialization

## Introduction

Immigration policy in Canada has been an integral component of nation building, and debates in this area have consistently been framed in terms of a decision between those immigrants who should be included as part of the expanding Canadian social fabric and those immigrants who should be excluded. This has resulted in constantly changing parameters for the “ideal immigrant”, with definitions built upon a range of rationales, from racial premises to economic motives. For federal Ministers tasked with the responsibility of managing immigration from Confederation to the present day, this has begged a simple question: “Who gets in?” Historically, the response to this question has placed a strong emphasis upon family reunification as a guiding pillar.

However, beginning in the mid 1990s to the early 2000s, the trend of a high volume of newcomers under the Family Class steadily declined to less than a third of all immigrants entering Canada. A paradigmatic shift within Canadian immigration has occurred, which has increasingly pushed for a stronger emphasis on the preferential entrance of economic migrants. In 2006, more than half of the Permanent Residents entering Canada entered under the Economic Class. This is reflected by the efforts of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, which have focused on attracting and admitting economic newcomers through the Federal Skilled Worker Program and Federal Skilled Trades Program, as well as those who are investors, entrepreneurs, and self-employed by expanding the Provincial Nominee Programs, the Live-in Caregiver program, and by creating the Canadian Experience Class in 2007.

Simultaneously, this paradigm shift also involves the injection of economic goals into areas of social policy by introducing reforms that replace social values and goals with economic ones, as can be observed with the May 2013 announcement of a package of reforms to the Family Class for immigration. These proposed reforms to the Family Class for immigration raise questions about the fairness, equity, and direction of Canada’s current approach to immigration for nation building.

## History

### *Early 1900s-Mid 1900s*

As a settler society, immigration has long been central to the policy-making process for Canadian nation building. Despite a tumultuous history of racially exclusionary immigration policies, such as the *Chinese Head Tax and Exclusion Act*, emphasis on the value of family reunification has been a longstanding fixture of the Canadian immigration system. Formally, this value dates as far back as *The Immigration Acts* of 1906 and 1910, which outlined the foundation for immigration in the 20th century. The first provision for admitting immigrants with relatives was outlined in 1908, and the first enumeration of specific relatives who could benefit from family immigration – including wives, children, parents, brothers, and sisters – was established in 1910 (DeShaw, 2006: 10).

One of the key developments arising out of the 1906 and 1910 *Immigration Acts* was the emergence of the principle of the absolute right of

the state to admit and exclude new members, which was enforced by empowering the cabinet to shape immigration policy at any given time in order to fit changing economic conditions. This resulted in significant variation in the parameters for family immigration from the early 1900s up to 1967, with continuous changes ranging from tight restrictions in the 1930s to opening up family immigration to any relative in 1951 (Kelley & Trebilcock, 2010: 220-316).

In 1967, new regulations were passed which would stabilize family immigration by creating two distinct family reunification categories: the “nominated relatives” category, subject to labour-market requirements as well as sponsorship requirements; and the “sponsored dependents” category, which was only subject to sponsorship requirements (DeShaw, 2006: 10). This development would lead to the establishment of a foundation for codifying a distinct and separate Family Class in the *1976 Immigration Act*.

### *1970s*

The *1976 Immigration Act* was insured in 1978 by the Parliament of Canada and outlined more specific procedural categorical conditions for entry into Canada. In terms of family migration to Canada, the *1976 Immigration Act* clearly enshrined in legislation the significance of family reunification: “to facilitate the reunion in Canada of Canadian citizens and permanent residents with their close relatives from abroad” (DeShaw, 2006: 10). Although the Points System that came into effect in 1967 was a defining component of immigration, this only pertained to independent immigrants; other classes, such as the family class, were not subject to the scrutiny of the points system as long as they passed basic criminal, security, and health checks. Thus, the importance of family reunification held strong intrinsic value that at this time was not subject to stringent barriers for denial. Rather, the contrary prevailed for family reunification. For example, in 1978 there was an expansion of the Family Class to include parents of any age (Kelley and Trebilcock, 2010: 390). Under the new rules, parents of any age were eligible to be sponsored. However, the sponsorship of children was limited to those under the age of 19. Exceptions were made for children older than 19 but “dependent on their parents for reasons of full-time study or disability” (Kelley & Trebilcock, 2010: 390). At this point in time, the only exceptions and considerations for exclusion under the Family Class were morally problematic cases such as adoptions of convenience utilized to exploit entry under the Family Class. Beyond this, conditions of exclusion under the Family Class were not based on challenging the intrinsic value of family.

Along with the proliferation of different immigration streams, with designated categories and conditions attached to them, the Parliament of Canada also introduced the categorization of business class immigrants in 1978. This was a transformative development given that in previous Canadian immigration history the link between immigration and economics was based solely upon the political and economic context of the time, in which immigration as a whole was either restricted during economic downturn or expanded during economic recovery but otherwise devoid of specific categorizations.

### 1980s and 1990s

In the 1980s, Canada experienced an economic downturn, which had an impact upon immigration numbers. In 1985, annual admissions totaled 84,000 persons, which was the lowest intake since 1962 (Kelley & Trebilcock, 2010: 380). Combined with the poor economic climate and the objectives in the *1976 Immigration Act*, which outlined Canada's humanitarian international obligations with respect to refugees, one of the primary concerns of immigration was managing the increasing refugee influx during the 1980s. This led to extensive parliamentary and other public debate during the 1980s over what exactly comprised the appropriate balance between humanitarian entrance, family class, business class, and independent immigrants.

In 1990, just over 50% of new arrivals came from Asia and the Middle East, a number that increased to 58% by 2006 (Kelley & Trebilcock, 2010: 381). Furthermore, in the early 1990s, the nature of the immigration debate changed to include not only the definition of an ideal immigrant but also how immigrants coming into Canada would enhance the workforce. For example, in 1990, representatives of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce wrote to the Minister of Employment and Immigration, Barbara McDougall, that Canadian immigration policy could be used as a major policy instrument for increasing the size and improving the quality of the labour force (Kelley & Trebilcock, 2010: 383). They further argued for an expansionary immigration policy aimed at allowing more immigrants into the business and independent workers classes. This set the context for immigration for the 1990s, which would move towards stricter criteria for annual admissions.

At the end of 1994 Citizenship and Immigration released a report based on a major consultation initiative on immigration titled, *Into the 21st Century: A Strategy for Immigration and Citizenship*. The report called for an overhaul of the current admissions process and argued for greater emphasis on economic immigrants who could enhance the labour market. From this report there emerged a three-member committee in 1996 to review the *1976 Immigration Act* in order to streamline the complexities that had been added to it through the thirty amendments over the previous twenty years (Kelley & Trebilcock, 2010: 390, 419). From this committee, another report emerged titled, *Not Just Numbers: A Canadian Framework for Future Immigration*. This report further asserted the importance of those coming to Canada being able to adapt, prosper, and help Canada grow (Kelley & Trebilcock, 2010: 420). This would further place the family class and economic classes in tension with one another, as economic outcomes increasingly became a priority over other immigration objectives.

### 2000s

With increasing attention being paid to aligning the immigration system with the labour market, the *1976 Immigration Act* was overhauled and replaced with the *2001 Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA). The Act itself was characterized as a "tough bill" by Elinor Caplan, the Immigration Minister at the time when the IRPA was drafted. A major focus of the IRPA was security, as the act was strongly influenced by the desire to keep criminals and illegal immigrants out. To achieve this, the IRPA took significant steps away from the *1976 Immigration Act*, only keeping the bare bones of the

previous legislation and leaving details for the executive to design and implement through regulation (Kelley & Trebilcock, 2010: 425).

The IRPA enables anyone holding the position of the Citizenship and Immigration Minister to capitalize upon security as a justification to exercise unilateral power and discretion. This has been illustrated in the form of a series of amendments and proposed changes that have emerged under Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney, such as the new selection system for the Federal Skilled Worker Program, the *Faster Removal of Foreign Criminals Act*, and the series of recent changes to the Family Class, which involve freezing parent and grandparent applications in 2011, introducing the Super Visa for temporary entry, and the most recent May 2013 proposed package of reforms to the Family Class.

## The Changes

Reforms to the Family Class of immigration were introduced in early May 2013. The reforms to the Family Class are designed to align entry under this category more with economic outcomes, which has largely been predicated upon an overarching narrative of emphasizing the burden to the tax payers imposed by the unmitigated entry of parents, grandparents, and dependent children 18+ years. These changes include:

- *Increasing the minimum necessary income (MNI) for sponsoring parents and grandparents by 30%.* Currently, a sponsor must demonstrate a level of income that meets the minimum necessary income or low income cut-off (LICO) for a given family size as established by Statistics Canada (CIC, 2013).
- *Lengthen the period for demonstrating the MNI from one year to three years.* This requires those interested in sponsoring parents and grandparents to demonstrate that they can meet the new income threshold for three consecutive tax years prior to submitting a sponsorship application (CIC, 2013).
- *Evidence of income confined to documents issued by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).* In line with the condition that those interested in sponsoring parents and grandparents will have to show income stability for three years, this income stability must now be proved using CRA notices of assessment (CIC, 2013).
- *Extend the sponsorship undertaking period to 20 years instead of 10 years.* This means that those interested in sponsoring parents and grandparents will now be committed to a lengthened sponsorship undertaking of 20 years. Sponsors and co-signers will be responsible for repaying any provincial social assistance benefits paid to the parent and grandparent for 20 years (CIC, 2013).
- *Changing the maximum age of dependents.* The maximum age for dependents will be lowered from the current age set at 22 and set at 18 years of age and under for **ALL** immigration programs (CIC, 2013).
- *Super Visa.* Making the Super Visa a permanent fixture in the immigration system (CIC, 2013).

In addition, leading up to this proposed package of changes, CIC began preliminary measures to redesign the Family Class by freezing all new and incoming applications for parent and grandparent sponsorship in 2011. CIC has further announced that with this 2013 package of changes, starting in 2014, parent and grandparent sponsorship will reopen with a set quota of only 5,000 new applications per year, which will continue for the immediate years to follow.

### **Problems with the proposed changes**

These changes are predicated upon (and claimed to be justified by) the notion that reforming the Family Class for immigration should maximize economic outcomes and proactively address the increasing number of aging Canadians in relation to young Canadians. According to Statistics Canada, in 2006, the average age of the Canadian population was 38.8 years, while the projected median age for 2056 would be 46.9 years (Statistics Canada, 2008). Statistics Canada also predicts that the proportion of elderly to children could double toward the middle of the twenty-first century, and that the current working-age population is growing older on average, with those aged 45-64 previously comprising 28% of the working-age population in the late 1980s contrasted to 38% in 2006, and expected to reach more than 42% by the mid-2010s (Statistics Canada, 2008).

Despite the fiscal concerns over sustainability that arise from an aging Canadian population, the CIC reforms neglect to consider social objectives and the economic benefits of social capital. Social capital is a theoretical concept coined by the academic Pierre Bourdieu. In basic terms, social capital (along with the related “cultural capital” and “symbolic capital”) is obtained by individuals through social networks that enhance the individual’s privilege and ability to access opportunities in a given social structure (Erel, 2010: 647). CIC’s lack of consideration for the social benefits of family can be observed numerous times in the wording of the Backgrounders outlining these changes. Examples include but are not limited to the following:

- “The PGP program generates costs to Canadian taxpayers, as PGPs are unlikely to engage in paid employment or to become financially independent when in Canada” (CIC, 2013).
- “Ensure an efficient PGP program by better managing the number of PGP applications received through the introduction of more rigorous financial requirements for PGP sponsors” (CIC, 2013).
- “Sponsorships are intended to minimize the impact of family reunification on social assistance and, ultimately, taxpayers. Lengthening the sponsorship undertaking period from 10 to 20 years for PGPs and their accompanying family members would extend the period during which provinces can recover from sponsors any provincial social assistance paid to PGPs and their accompanying family members. This would mitigate the draw on social assistance programs and improve the fiscal sustainability of the PGP program” (CIC, 2013).

This package of changes is the beginning of a slippery slope that establishes rationale for disassociating application reviews from the lives of real people, creating a process that reduces human life to positive and negative externalities to taxpayers. This sentiment is not restricted to the sponsorship of parents and grandparents but is also reflected across the board, with the lowering of the age of dependents to 18 years for all immigration classes.

Such a narrow focus on economic outcomes systemically devalues the place that the family unit has historically held in Canada and creates a host of systemic barriers that render family reunification inaccessible to many. The impact of these changes will be outlined below. Ultimately, while these new changes may be implemented for economic purposes, overall, they are unjust, undermine the value of family, and reintroduce racially stratified immigration policies reminiscent of racist policies from Canada's past.

### **Impact of the changes**

#### *Lack of Industry Support*

The package of reforms to the Family Class has not been received well by immigration civic actors. This is clearly indicated by the lack of support for these changes during the CIC consultation process. The Regulatory Impact Analysis Statement released by CIC on this package of changes indicated that the consultations sought feedback on two key areas: (1) how to manage the intake of applications, and (2) what a modernized PGP program could look like. All of the proposed options received mixed responses from industry stakeholders and the general public. For example, respondents were almost equally divided on increasing the MNI and lengthening the MNI demonstration period (44% of the general public agreed, 41% disagreed; while 36% of stakeholders agreed, 46% disagreed), and lengthening the current sponsorship undertaking period (45% of the general public agreed, 40% disagreed; while 36% of stakeholders agreed, 48% disagreed) (CIC, 2013).

The lack of support from civic stakeholders also extends beyond the consultation process and into opposition to this package of changes. For example, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) has stated the following in a Backgrounder on the Super Visa:

We would still need to consider the broader issue of our inequitable immigration practices. These practices include permitting only those with a higher level of income to reunify with family members, either as permanent residents or as visitors, and making it easier for those from only some countries to reunify more easily with family because they are not subject to a visa restriction (OCASI, 2012).

The Maytree Foundation states that immigration reform should be based on four guiding principles:

- Immigration policy should be based primarily on long-term social and economic objectives and a commitment to citizenship (Alboim & Cohl, 2012).
- Immigration policy should be evidence-based, comprehensive, fair, and respectful of human rights (Alboim & Cohl, 2012).

- Immigration policy should be developed through public and stakeholder engagement, meaningful federal-provincial-territorial consultation, and democratic processes (Alboim & Cohl, 2012).
- Immigration policy should enhance Canada's reputation around the world (Alboim & Cohl, 2012).

The Canadian Counsel for Refugees (CCR) remarks that the analysis presented by the government focuses only on economic issues. Importantly, the CCR notes that the government analysis does not mention the following:

- Immigration policy should enhance Canada's reputation around the world (CCR, 2013).
- Reuniting families is one of the objectives of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (CCR, 2013).
- Most Canadians consider that 19 or 20 year old unmarried children are still part of the family and need their parents' support (CCR, 2013).
- In many societies, it is difficult and even dangerous for single young women to live alone (CCR, 2013).

Winnipeg Immigration Lawyer R. Reis Pagtakhan points out several key problems with these new changes (Pagtakhan, 2013):

- The federal government states that a 12-month period is not a reliable indicator of a sponsor's financial stability, but banks and credit unions do not require a person to have three years of income to obtain mortgages or loans.
- The immigration low income cut-off number does not take into account differences in the cost of living in different areas in Canada.
- While the government has increased the minimum-income level, it has maintained the rule that only one person and their spouse can be sponsors, rather than allowing co-sponsorship with other siblings.

In addition to a lack of industry support, the federal Official Opposition, New Democratic Party of Canada (NDP), has launched a formal petition against these changes (NDP, 2013). NDP Citizenship and Immigration Critic, Jinny Sims, has stated with regard to these new changes that, "In this economy, it's unreasonable to expect people to have the same income level for three years in a row ... The Conservatives are always talking about families, this begs the question – whose families are they talking about?" (The Canadian Press, 2013).

Despite moderate support from the general public, the feedback from civic stakeholders and the official opposition charged with holding the governing party accountable all illustrate how these changes are too narrowly focused upon economic outcomes that disregard the intrinsic values of family and human life.

### *Racialization of Family Sponsorship*

The nature of these reforms are further problematic, as they will disproportionately affect racialized groups by creating the conditions for structural racism. Structural racism can be understood as a phenomenon that refers to a system of social structures and power relations that produce cumulative, persistent, race-based inequalities (Ryerson Task Force on Anti-Racism, 2010: 8). It is important to note that structural racism can be either explicit or implicit and provides a useful context for understanding the systemic outcomes of policy formation. In this case, CIC is the source of power relations and policy is the tool to create conditions of inequality: the CIC only grants access to families of a certain economic standing by adjusting policy, redesigning the Family Class to no longer make it accessible for all types of families. The following sections will seek to demonstrate the link between socioeconomic standing and race, in order to illustrate how the proposed reforms to the Family Class will have systemic racializing outcomes.

Statistics Canada indicates that on a regional basis Asia (including the Middle East) remained Canada's largest source of immigrants between 2006 and 2011, with the Philippines, China, and India comprising the top three source countries of newcomers to Canada (CIC, 2013). Statistics Canada also indicates that the 2011 *National Household Survey* (NHS) revealed an increase in the share of immigration from Africa, Central and South America, and the Caribbean during the past five years (CIC, 2013).

Interestingly, Statistics Canada estimates that racialized groups will make up a third of Canada's population by 2031 (Black and Galabuzi, 2011: 4). As outlined in *Canada's Colour Coded Labour Market*, a report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and Wellesley Institute, racialized Canadians earn only 81.4 cents for every dollar paid to non-racialized Canadians (Black and Galabuzi, 2011: 11). In addition, the work they are able to attain is much more likely to be insecure, temporary, and low paying. Despite strong willingness to work, racialized men are 24% more likely to be unemployed than non-racialized men. Racialized women are 48% more likely to be unemployed than non-racialized men (Black and Galabuzi, 2011: 4). Furthermore, such discrepancies are not due to a lack of education. A report by RBC cites that more than 40% of incoming immigrants possess a Bachelor's degree or higher compared to 17% among the Canadian born (RBC Economics Research, 2011: 1). Furthermore, economic downturn cannot be used to explain this phenomenon. For example, between 2000 and 2005, during a significant economic growth period for Canada, racialized workers contributed to that growth but did not enjoy the benefits (Block and Galabuzi, 2011: 4).

The new Super Visa, an alternative to bringing parents and grandparents to Canada on a temporary basis, is a stratified solution that only serves to further reinforce financial and racial barriers. CIC cites that, since the launch of the Super Visa, more than 15,000 visas have been issued to date, with at present over 1000 visas being issued to parents and grandparents of Canadian citizens or permanent residents every month (CIC, 2013). Yet the numbers for Super Visas that CIC cite only take into consideration those who can afford to take part in this option. The Super Visa is a much more costly avenue for families than the application process for sponsorship or permanent

residency. The Super Visa process alone involves substantial application fees, paying for \$100,000 of insurance coverage to cover all the costs associated with parents and grandparents while they are in Canada, as well as travel expenses, which then must be repeated every two years upon reaching the two year maximum of the Super Visa.

In addition, CIC reports that there is a high approval rate of overall 85% for parents as well as grandparents and to date almost 99% of Super Visa applicants who met the requirements were approved (CIC, 2013). However, these approval rates critically fail to mention the breakdown of source countries. Higher approval rates for applicants for Super Visas from the US and Europe have been reported with substantially lower approval rates for countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East (OCASI, 2012). This is problematic given the consideration that Asia and the Middle East are the top regions that newcomers are arriving from.

The changes to the Family Class directly affect racialized Canadians and newcomers. As mentioned above, racialized Canadians disproportionately have poorer labour market outcomes, and by raising the MNI for sponsorship of parents and grandparents, the changes prevent racialized newcomers from being able to benefit from the support that extended family members can provide such as emotional support, financial support, domestic support, etc.

These issues point towards the emerging trend of the racialization of poverty in which poverty becomes disproportionately concentrated and reproduced along racialized lines (Block and Galabuzi, 2011: 15). One of the most staggering implications of the racialization of poverty is the connection between type of work, socioeconomic status, and health outcomes as understood by a Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) approach. A SDOH approach considers the full range of modifiable economic and political conditions that lead to poor health outcomes and systemic health disparities (Block and Galabuzi, 2011: 15-16). Statistics Canada outlines that there is a difference in life expectancy between the poorest 10% and the richest 10% of Canadians of 7.4 years for men and 4.5 years for women (Block and Galabuzi, 2011: 17). When the health-related quality of life is considered, Statistics Canada found the gap became worse. The richest 10% of men enjoying 14.1 more years of healthy living than the poorest 10% of men. The richest 10% of women enjoyed 9.5 more years of healthy living than the poorest 10% of women (Block and Galabuzi, 2011: 17).

As the statistics illustrate, the implications of the racialization of poverty directly translate into negative health outcomes for racialized Canadians. This directly challenges the “preventative cost-cutting measures” that CIC cites to justify restricting entry of parents, grandparents, and dependents over 18. Although CIC has been able to compile some estimates of the health costs incurred by older individuals, a growing marginalized racialized population in Canada directly challenges the cost savings associated with these restrictions. It cannot go under-acknowledged that poor socioeconomic outcomes create the structural conditions for long-term negative health outcomes, which translate directly into costs to the health care system and tax payers.

### *Live-in Care Giver Program Case study*

Barriers for racialized Canadian and newcomers are also present with the change to reduce the age of dependents from 22 to 18, which will negatively impact other streams of immigration. This can be most notably witnessed with the Live-in Care Giver stream of immigration. As noted in the Toronto Star: “The change will ultimately apply to live-in caregivers and refugees. For these groups, the process of qualifying for permanent resident status in Canada varies and can take years, by then, their children may miss the age cut-off” (Keung, 2013). The CIC response to this dilemma further reinforces an economic rationale for family reunification, by stating that those over the age of 18 can apply to visit or immigrate to Canada independently through other streams such as the international student stream (CIC, 2013).

However, applying as an international student under the Canadian Experience Class has several restrictive stipulations. First, individuals must meet the conditions of eligibility, which has substantial language requirements. For example, those who have only earned their credentials in English or French as a second language are not eligible to apply for permanent residency (CIC, 2013). If individuals meet the eligibility criteria, they then must have the financial means to pay for the costs associated with applying to become an international student, i.e., international student tuition fees, student-visa application fees, and living expenses. To contextualize the costs, the average tuition and ancillary fees for domestic students enrolled in an arts and science program in Canada currently stands at \$6,100 — much less than the \$17,200 an international student pays for the same education (Hansen, 2011). Furthermore, international students do not qualify for most forms of federal or provincial aid and must cover their own costs (Hansen, 2011). Then, international students must gain at least one year of work experience in Canada in a managerial, professional, technical, or trade occupation in order to begin the process of applying for permanent residency through the Canadian Experience Class. The application process for the CEC class further involves payment of a \$550.00 application fee (CIC, 2013). Consequently, this is an extremely costly avenue and largely beyond the financial reach of Live-in Caregivers with a minimum wage of \$10.56/hour (Keung, 2012).

Further analysis of these reforms clearly illustrates the disproportionate impact that these changes will have on Filipina women who are already extremely vulnerable as Live-in Caregivers. From 1998 to 2003, the LCP population from the Philippines grew from 88% to 95% (Cheung, 2006). CIC cites that growth of the LCP has been significant since 2000, rising from 7,450 in 2000 to 39,000 by 2009, but has declined to roughly 25,000 in 2011 (CIC, 2012). In addition, CIC indicates that by 2010, the transitions from temporary to permanent status represented almost 25% of new permanent residents. Temporary Foreign Workers accounted for roughly 30% of all the transitions, with much of that attributable to Filipina LCPs choosing to remain in Canada and entering through the Economic Class (CIC, 2012). In addition, the number of spouses and dependents of Live-in Caregivers has continued to increase every year. In 2011, the amount of spouses and dependents exceeded the amount of Live-in Caregiver principal applicants.

***Live-in Caregiver: Permanent Residents***

	Live-in caregivers-principal applicants	Live-in caregivers-spouses and dependants
<b>2002</b>	1,521	464
<b>2003</b>	2,230	1,075
<b>2004</b>	2,496	1,796
<b>2005</b>	3,063	1,489
<b>2006</b>	3,547	3,348
<b>2007</b>	3,433	2,685
<b>2008</b>	6,157	4,354
<b>2009</b>	6,273	6,182
<b>2010</b>	7,664	6,247
<b>2011</b>	5,033	6,214

Source: Drawn from Statistics Canada (CIC, 2012)

Interestingly, up until 2011, the Live-in Caregiver stream and Canadian Experience Class were the only streams of economic immigration in which spouses and dependents did not outnumber principal applicants. From 2002-2011, all other economic streams including the Skilled Workers, Entrepreneurs, Self Employed, Investors, and Provincial/Territorial nominees, which all had significantly higher amounts of spouses and dependents entering in relation to principal applicants.

This issue critically brings into question the underlying motives of the reforms to the Family Class to restrict the age-limit of dependent children, as the number of dependents of Live-in Caregivers started to outnumber principal applicant numbers in 2011. In doing so, this illuminates a significant disadvantage to racialized groups like Filipinas by making reunification only accessible to those who fit the economic prototype for immigration as established by CIC.

***Other Classes of Immigration***

The proposed changes will also have negative effects on the overall goals for other streams of immigration such as the Canadian Experience Class, Federal Skilled Workers, and Provincial Nominee Programs. The objectives as outlined in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* explicitly state (IRPA, 2001: s. 27):

The objectives of this Act with respect to immigration are

- (a) to permit Canada to pursue the maximum social, cultural and economic benefits of immigration;
- (b) to enrich and strengthen the social and cultural fabric of Canadian society, while respecting the federal, bilingual and multicultural character of Canada;
- (b.1) to support and assist the development of minority official languages communities in Canada;
- (c) to support the development of a strong and prosperous Canadian economy, in which the benefits of immigration are shared across all regions of Canada;
- (d) to see that families are reunited in Canada;
- (e) to promote the successful integration of permanent residents into Canada, while recognizing that integration involves mutual obligations for new immigrants and Canadian society;
- (f) to support, by means of consistent standards and prompt processing, the attainment of immigration goals established by the Government of Canada in consultation with the provinces;
- (g) to facilitate the entry of visitors, students and temporary workers for purposes such as trade, commerce, tourism, international understanding and cultural, educational and scientific activities;
- (h) to protect public health and safety and to maintain the security of Canadian society;
- (i) to promote international justice and security by fostering respect for human rights and by denying access to Canadian territory to persons who are criminals or security risks; and
- (j) to work in cooperation with the provinces to secure better recognition of the foreign credentials of permanent residents and their more rapid integration into society

The proposed reforms could undermine all of the objectives of this project in a variety of ways. For example, negative growth and retention rates could emerge for the Provincial Nominee stream for immigration, which directly runs counter to Canada's immigration goals for nation building. Thus far, the Provincial Nominee Program in Manitoba has been one of the most successful of its kind for attracting newcomers to the province, and especially rural areas. In 2007, immigration to Manitoba represented 4.6% of total immigration to Canada (Moss, Bucklaschuk and Annis, 2009). Importantly, 45% of this immigration comprises Temporary Foreign Workers who are seeking a pathway to permanency and who have been factored into the province's annual immigration targets. Retention rates are directly linked to welcoming communities that have the capacity to successfully absorb newcomers and assist their integration. Quintessential to this integration is the fostering of social capital, as defined above. Despite settlement services being available to assist newcomer integration, the barriers to being able to

bring in parents, grandparents, and dependent children could potentially hinder efforts for settlement in more rural areas where ethnic communities are not as well established.

In addition, the proposed change of sponsors having to meet the MNI + 30% requirement could negatively affect immigration goals to settle more rural areas through the Provincial Nominee Program. This is because the MNI is based on the Low Income Cut Off line (LICO) established by Statistics Canada, which is designed to indicate an income threshold below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income on the necessities of food, shelter, and clothing than the average family (Statistics Canada, 2009). The LICO is not standardized for all individuals, but rather calculated based on family size and region of residence. As a result, LICOs in rural areas is higher than urban areas. Thus, migrants coming through PNP programs to rural areas who want to sponsor PGPs not only have to meet a higher LICO, but will now be required to pay an additional 30%.

A similar dilemma could also impact other streams of economic immigration, in which newcomers will be required to be more independent, rather than be able to rely on parents and grandparents for support. In contrast, from 1980 to 1994, 90% of Indian immigrants to British Columbia were admitted to Canada under the Family Class and during this time frame 33% were age 50 or older; from 1996-2000 27% were 50 or older, and from 2000-2003 24% were in that age group (Tigar, 2006: 13). Importantly, the Family Class for Indian newcomers played an important role in establishing the Indian community in British Columbia.

These statistics provide a small glimpse into the shift in immigration for one of Canada's largest ethnic groups, and the emerging theme of the expectation of self-sufficiency with no extra costs associated to the taxpayers. As a report by the Vancouver Centre outlines, "dominant immigration discourse includes the connotation that the family reunification program needs to be based on the Canadian nuclear family, not the extended Asian or African family" (Tigar, 2006: 15). Furthermore, Abu-Laban (1998) argues, that the shift in immigration policy that gives priority to economic over family immigrants and refugees reflects an increasing emphasis on economic self-sufficiency as a measure of an immigrant's worth, reduced notions of citizenship and citizen's rights, and a corresponding "problematization of immigrant families" (Tigar, 2006: 5).

### **Benefits of Parents and Grandparents**

Despite the economic rhetoric cited as the justification and motivation behind these changes, there are many benefits that challenge the proposed reforms to the Family Class. The proliferation of the self-sustaining nuclear family is a very recent mode of organization in which family stability is first and foremost attributed to economic outcomes (Baker, 2009: 150). However, in many other parts of the world from which newcomers to Canada emigrate, the extended family model is the predominate mode of familial organization.

Family social relationships are integral for multigenerational households and are based on interrelated factors. Bengston and Roberts state that the family solidarity model is not only based upon the relationship between parents and children, but also emphasizes the importance of the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren by outlining the importance of: (1)

contact, (2) exchange of support, (3) norms of obligation, (4) values, (5) relationship quality, and (6) opportunity structure (Bengston, 1991: 856-870). In this manner, grandparents are essential for the success of families by providing additional support such as domestic support, childcare, emotional support, socialization of children, and financial support.

The benefit of parents and grandparents to the family unit is also confirmed by various sources. A study by Arlene Tigar McLaren on the experience of older South Asian Women's experiences in Vancouver, published through the Vancouver Centre of Excellence, involved twenty semi-structured interviews with women who arrived in Canada between 1987 and 2002 and were 60-80 years old. The responses indicated that the women came to Canada usually to help their adult children and their spouses or partners (Tigar, 2006: 16). The study also indicated that it is misleading to assume that sponsorship was unidirectional, with an adult child sponsoring and financially supporting a parent. One of the women noted: "We help our children, sometimes financially, we help them. They are at initial stages, we bought a house, we helped, we gave some money, because they are not able as yet. Because they are only two years in this country" (Tigar, 2006: 16). As well, many of the women expressed how their childcare and domestic work was essential to their children's financial livelihoods, and particularly helpful to mothers (Tigar, 2006: 16).

Leung and McDonalds' research on female caregivers and receivers in three generational Chinese-Canadian households illustrates how elderly women (who were usually sponsored by their families) helped their adult children in the home. Especially in dual-career families, they took care of children. They made meals, did household chores, and comforted the children. Importantly, the care giving between adult children and aging parents was likely to be reciprocal unless the latter were frail and ill (Leung and McDonald, 2001: 13).

Four recent Australian studies have also explored grandparents caring for young grandchildren on a regular but not custodial basis to further explore the role and relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. The studies focused on 20 grandparents residing in the Sydney area (some grandparents born in other countries). As discussed in the summary and implications section, the findings of the study draw attention to:

- The significance of grandparents' relationships with their grandchildren and their role in fostering their grandchildren's development in the critical early years (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2003: 9).
- With continuing social change, including changes in family composition and the rise in maternal employment, it is possible for grandparents to play a significant role in the lives of many young children (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2003: 9).
- The quality of care provided by grandparents reflects the recent recognition being given to the importance of relationships during the critical early years of life. Therefore, it is desirable that, where needed, grandparents be supported in providing such care and given recognition for the significant role that they play in children's early development (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2003: 9).

- Grandparent childcare providers do have a role to play as significant support figures during the early years of their grandchildren's lives. They also have a role as contributors to the child care system in supporting economic growth (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2003:9).

Furthermore, with the increasing diversity of the Canadian population, grandparents can play an important role as cultural educators, teaching and reinforcing the mother tongue language, socialization, and negotiation of ethnic identity. Statistics Canada reported in 2011 that more than 200 languages were spoken in Canada with one-fifth of Canada's population or nearly 6,630,000 speaking a language other than English or French at home (Statistics Canada, 2011). In addition, the use of multiple languages at home has increased. In 2011, 11.5% of the population reported using English and a language other than French, up from the previously cited 9.1% of the population (Statistics Canada, 2011). Also, eight languages have growth greater than 30%. Nearly 279,000 people reported speaking Tagalog most often in 2011, up from 170,000 five years earlier. Seven other language groups also saw their numbers increase by more than 30%. This included growth rates of: Mandarin (+50%), Arabic (+47%), Hindi (+44%), Creole languages (+42%), Bengali (+40%), Persian (+33%), and Spanish (+32%) (Statistics Canada, 2011). Importantly, these figures provide a small glimpse into the increasing linguistic diversity of the Canadian population, which sets the context for the importance of family reunification for generating socially rich multiculturalism rather than perpetuating a national identity defined by racialization and economics.

To further elaborate, preschool children begin to understand perceived ethnic differences and adopt behavior based on these perceived ethnic differences (Kowalski, 2003: 686). Children begin the process of developing an ethnic identity as they are socialized in "two cultures": the Canadian and their heritage cultures. Thus, ethnic-socialization and ethnic identity are intimately linked. Ethnic socialization begins at home. Families (i.e., parents/guardians, extended family members, siblings, and fictive kin) teach their children about the social meaning and consequence of ethnicity (Banks-Wallace and Parks, 2001: 82). Parents (and other key informants) influence their children's ethnic identity. Through this process, children learn about their own culture and/or cultural differences, their families' heritage, identity politics, and issues of discrimination. In a diverse and multicultural country like Canada, young children need to learn how to deal with racialized interactions. Even in kindergarten, children may need to respond to overt acts of racism, as well as others continually asking about their ethnic identification (Katz and Kofkin, 1997: 55). Thus, resolving potential conflicts and discrepancies between multiple cultures are necessary for healthy psychological functioning among ethnic minority and immigrant youth (Umana-Taylor and Fine, 2004: 43). Ethnic socialization and ethnic identity are both instrumental in influencing individual outcomes, including self-esteem, academic motivation and achievement, and behavioural outcomes.

## Conclusion

This report has outlined why the most recent proposed changes to the Family Class of immigration should not be implemented, with the specific purpose of creating research for the “My Canada Includes All Families” campaign. The main point this MRP seeks to emphasize is the problematic transformation of the Canadian immigration system of mostly focusing on economic outcomes and compromising social values, thus undermining the place of the family unit in Canada. The historical analysis presented within this report clearly illuminates that family reunification has been a long-standing intrinsically valued element of the Canadian immigration system that has been slowly eroded by the pursuit of economic outcomes. Allowing this package of reforms to be implemented will further contribute to this erosion and redefine values for Canadian nation building that no longer place social capital value upon family reunification.

Beyond this troublesome shift in values, this report has also outlined the concrete problems associated with this package of reforms that demonstrate an array of discrepancies that rigorously call into question the legitimacy for implementing these reforms. A lack of industry support from a variety of civic stakeholders showcased the financially restrictive nature of these reforms that create a discriminatory socio-economic divide for accessibility of family reunification. Building upon the socio-economic disadvantages that this package of reforms creates, analysis of Statistics Canada data and various reports illustrated how racialization and economic status are intimately linked to demonstrate the racialized outcomes of reforming the Family Class. Next, research was presented that outlines the social capital benefits of the support of extended families including emotional support, domestic support, child care, cultural socialization of children, linguistic reinforcement, and in some cases financial support. This evidence helps us make the case that accessibility for family reunification for all newcomers must remain a fixture of the Canadian immigration system.

Ultimately, the package of reforms to the Family Class is a racialized set of reforms that offers an unmitigated solution to the current fiscal climate of austerity and aging Canadian demographic. Although policy must evolve to meet ever-changing needs, this package of reforms, as it stands, is not reflective of the objective to reunite families as outlined in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*.

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