

Dossier: Mexican Migration to Canada Statistical Data and Interview With Chona Iturralde, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)

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INTRODUCTION

Canada was built on immigration, and one of every six Canadian residents was born outside the country (McCrank, 2010). Canada's immigration may be compared to the United States' due to geographical proximity and similar historical conditions, and to Australia's, because of similar geographic conditions (huge resources and territories, but small populations). Canada, the U.S., and Australia are all principal receiving countries in international migration that accepted a large number of displaced persons and refugees for permanent settlement after World War II.

Nevertheless, the rate of immigration per capita to Canada is higher than the one to the U.S. (Green, 1995). Canada also has a stricter policy for selecting candidates, especially since the introduction of the points system (the Skilled Worker Programme) in 1967 that evaluates migrants according to their education, language skills, work experience, age, arranged employment, and adaptability. Canada currently receives more than 300 000 applications a year (Cerna, 2010), but only accepts about 250 000 immigrants and 175 000 foreign temporary workers annually (McCrank, 2010).

Even during the 2008 recession, Canada did not restrict entry of new migrants. The Canadian government's rationale was that, given the demographic changes expected over the next 20 years, "developed countries need to attract talent, reduce skills gaps and project the skills shortage for the next few years. This is the time to attract the best skills instead of reducing the intake of immigrants" (Mittal, 2008). Minister for Immigration Jason Kenney stated that the country "would maintain its current policy

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of encouraging immigration in order to meet identified labor shortages in key areas despite the financial crisis." He added that "attracting different types of skills and talent [is] necessary for developed countries to compete in the global economy. Canada's strategy of encouraging people to move there is the best way to prepare to exit the crisis" (Mittal, 2008).

Despite this historical background, there have also been opinions favoring changes in Canada's immigration system. For instance, it appears that more foreign workers are needed in the labor market than the number of entry visas issued every year (Yalnizyan, 2011). According to declarations by the Center for Immigration Policy Reform, Canadian politicians are too concerned about winning the votes of new Canadians to admit that the system is broken and that the flow of immigrants is overwhelming its labor markets, with the unemployment rate now at about 7 percent (McCrank, 2010).

From this perspective, it is appropriate to ask: what is the situation of Mexican professionals in this country? Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) does a census every five years, counting the number of entries of skilled foreign workers. The situation of Mexican skilled workers may be analyzed through this institution's statistics included in this dossier. An interview with Chona Iturralde also explains some key issues for the Canadian migration policy. Her views may be considered a broad interpretation of the statistical data provided by the graphs.

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**INTERVIEW WITH CHONA ITURRALDE,
RESEARCH MANAGER OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA,
DONE AT MIGRATION CANADA HEADQUARTERS IN OTTAWA,
SEPTEMBER 16, 2010**

Chona Iturralde is from the Philippines. She has been working with Migration Canada since 2001, but she has been in her current position since 2006. She came to Canada in 1992 to study and later found work. She thought she didn't mind staying. She is hardly familiar with Mexico, having only been on short visits; nevertheless, her work concerns Mexican migrants.

In a paper she wrote with DeVoretz (2001), Iturralde, now a Canadian official, questioned brain drain in Canada and asked under what conditions highly educated Canadians would stay in Canada given the sub-

stantial returns for moving to the United States. The authors found that the probability of staying in Canada is convex to age, and depends on marital status, previous mobility history, and the expected income gain from moving. Given the new ease of movement and high returns, why do so few highly trained Canadians leave for the United States? Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien offered one potential answer to this question by citing the fact that Canada is ranked number one on the Human Development Index (HDI). This dossier offers an update on Chona Iturralde's experience with Canadian immigration, this time not only as a scholar but also as an official.



Recently, the French government acknowledged that their migration policy was inspired by Canada's, in the sense that the country chooses the people, and not the people, the country. Is that true of Canadian migration policy?

CI: Canada is a very important work force country and many people who come to Canada are well-treated. We make sure that before they come here they know what to expect and we assure their welfare. I guess that's what makes Canada a good place to go, because of the way we treat both permanent and temporary residents. I don't know of any country in particular who follows that policy.



Does Canada choose people who wish to immigrate to specific regions?

CI: We have different categories for choosing people; we have the permanent and temporary immigrants. Under the permanent stream, we have different subcategories [see tables] under which we allow individuals to become permanent residents because of their skills. That's the skilled workers, the PMPs (performance management plans) that have to show their skills before coming to Canada in order to participate in the labor market. On the other side, we also have immigration plans where we allow people for humanitarian reasons, for example people who are seeking asylum, and we then provide assistance to them. We don't actually pick one country over another, even though some countries have had visas imposed, such as in the case of Mexico. This may have an impact on their emigration flows to Canada. People should qualify under the require-

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ments of the general program. We have also recently implemented the Canadian Experience Class site, for people who want to transform their temporary stay in Canada into permanent residence.



What kinds of skills are most appreciated in Canada?

At a federal level, we usually try to select highly skilled individuals, with skill levels O (managers), A (professionals) and B (skilled and technical), people we sometimes call “the brightest ones.” The need for certain occupations depends on the province.

CI: At a federal level, we usually try to select highly skilled individuals, with skill levels O (managers), A (professionals) and B (skilled and technical), people we sometimes call “the brightest ones.” The need for certain occupations depends on the province. We also have the Provincial Nominees Programme where each province can choose the occupations they need. Briefly put, skilled workers are permanent residents and the unskilled are temporary. And we also have another stream, which is the temporary, like all the agricultural workers coming from Mexico. And lately we have the low skilled program –actually there is a significant flow from Mexico as well– so that’s also another route for people to come to Canada.



Do you prioritize skilled workers over temporary ones?


CI: No, we need them both. There is a demand. For permanent residents, there are different streams. It’s very different on who the people are that come here, for example considering the number of family members. The demand for certain occupations certainly has an impact on immigration tendencies. But I would say the numbers of those who come to Canada do not give us information on the importance of certain immigration groups over others. There are other factors that affect the flows.




What is migrants’ contribution to Canadian society?

CI: There is really not a lot of literature on this, but the debate on their contribution has been going on for quite a while now. We know for sure that they have an impact. This is an exchange: we contribute to them, and they contribute to us on the social and cultural level. I actually wrote a small piece on that. On the one hand, in terms of consumption expenditure, housing goes up; the more they come here, the higher the demand

for housing, so government expenditure increases as well, and our expenditures for social benefits increases. On the other hand, we get to know the cultures of other countries and their different languages, which is really great. They also have a demographic impact, an impact on the labor market and on the population's aging. This has to be analyzed in terms of benefits, but also of costs.

 There have been predictions that the Canadian economy will depend almost entirely on foreign workforce in 10 years.

CI: No, that is not true. Migration just has an impact on the net labor force growth. When using statistical data, we also advise not to use a single year. On the forecast, there are a lot of assumptions. It uses data for graduates from Canadian institutions, but we also have assumptions about the flows. The affirmation that migrants could or should be the main workforce in Canada is incorrect.

 Do you think the brain drain to Canada is a problem for sending countries?

CI: I think migration is a personal decision, and if Canada doesn't get them, some other country will. Countries compete. It also depends on the skill level. I really don't have any opinion about brain drain. The problem is why they leave. You also have to consider that there is return migration. That question corresponds to the country they come from. There are some problems at the institutional level, if the government of the country of origin has spent money on them. Then we speak of costs, of an investment. But if you think that the person may return money to his country of origin –and sometimes the sums are huge– we go back to the question of how to measure this phenomenon.

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 How representative are Mexicans among the skilled-worker community in Canada? Not only in terms of numbers, but also in terms of image.

CI: Generally, if we are talking about Mexicans who actually live in Canada, it is a relatively small number. They tend to be educated and have an upper social status. These are Canadian Mexicans, actually living in

Canada. At the same time, the temporary flow of immigrants under the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Programme is mainly associated with Mexicans, not with other Latin American populations. But Mexicans do not enjoy high visibility in Canada. Actually, when we look at the census data, the numbers are small. The flow of Mexicans to Canada, especially the temporary flow, benefits Mexico because of remittances.



What is the cooperation between Mexico and Canada on migration issues like?

The relationship with Mexico has flowed especially after NAFTA because we are now strategic partners, and we also have more agreements and political consultations. These are observations prior to the imposition of visas.

CI: The relationship with Mexico has flowed especially after NAFTA because we are now strategic partners, and we also have more agreements and political consultations. These are observations prior to the imposition of visas. It was emphasized that the visa imposition will not have any impact on relations between Canada and Mexico.



How do Canadians perceive this visa imposition?

CI: The reason for this decision is really justified. Almost a third of refugee applications came from Mexico, even though most of them were being rejected. I guess there is a very good reason for this visa imposition. The action at the individual level –applying for a visa the same way the U.S. imposed a visa– always provokes some resentment. At the governmental level I would say relations are the same. There was no flow in the temporary agricultural workers. I don't know if it's too early to estimate if flows between Canada and Mexico have been affected, because visas were imposed in July 2009. When we look at the figures in the first two quarters of 2009, there was no significant change in flows other than seasonal agricultural workers.



Is there a special department for Mexicans at Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)?

CI: They are distributed in the work of all the departments. For the data that we provide, we have different administrative systems inside and outside the organization that allow us to put them together and come up with a data base.



How does CIC cooperate with other state institutions such as the Ministry of Education? For example scholarships for foreigners involve both education and migration.

CI: CIC works closely with any governmental institution at the provincial, ministerial or governmental level. We have, for example, the Canadian Immigration Financial Assistance (CIFA), which offers scholarships to foreign students. If you are CIFA scholar, you're not supposed to apply for a worker's program. We have a legal labor market opinion (LMO) application, available on the internet. We want to make sure that the labor market requirements have been met, and we provide the necessary documents. In order to know if a person qualifies for a work permit, we have to work with provinces and they notify us. In the case of students, we want them to have some experience with the labor market in Canada, to see how great this country is! [Laughs.]

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**Statistical Data on Mexican Migration
To Canada Provided by the CIC after the Last Update
On Foreign Immigration**

Table 1
PERMANENT RESIDENTS FROM MEXICO BY OFFICIAL
LANGUAGES SPOKEN AND PROVINCE IN CANADA, 2009

Official Languages Spoken	Province	2009
English	Newfoundland and Labrador	--
	Prince Edward Island	--
	Nova Scotia	11
	New Brunswick	--
	Quebec	172
	Ontario	831
	Manitoba	70
	Saskatchewan	26
	Alberta	309
	British Columbia	396
	Yukon Territory	5
Northwest Territories	--	
English Total		1 829
French	Quebec	370
	Alberta	8
French Total		378
Both French and English	Quebec	517
	Ontario	56
	Alberta	12
	British Columbia	30
Both French and English Total		615
Neither	Quebec	120
	Ontario	66
	Manitoba	--
	Saskatchewan	--
	Alberta	26
	British Columbia	52
Neither Total		282
Permanent Residents - (Mexico) Total		3 104
Permanent Residents (Mexico)		0
	Newfoundland and Labrador	--
	Prince Edward Island	--
	Nova Scotia	11
	New Brunswick	--
	Quebec	1 179
	Ontario	953
	Manitoba	85
	Saskatchewan	29
	Alberta	355
	British Columbia	478
	Yukon Territory	5
Northwest Territories	--	
Permanent Residents (Mexico) Total		3 104

Source: Citizenship & Immigration Canada (CIC), RDM, Facts and Figures 2009.

Note: For reasons of privacy, some cells in this table have been suppressed and replaced with the notation --. As a result, components may not add up to the total indicated. In general, CIC has suppressed cells containing fewer than five cases, except where it does not release personal information on an identifiable individual.

Table 2
MEXICAN PERMANENT RESIDENTS IN CANADA
BY LANDING CATEGORY, 2009

Landing Category	Province	2009
Family Class	Newfoundland and Labrador	--
	Nova Scotia	--
	New Brunswick	--
	Quebec	161
	Ontario	243
	Manitoba	38
	Saskatchewan	--
	Alberta	114
	British Columbia	153
Family Class Total		732
Economic Immigrants	Newfoundland and Labrador	--
	Prince Edward Island	--
	Nova Scotia	--
	Quebec	589
	Ontario	312
	Manitoba	41
	Saskatchewan	14
	Alberta	187
	British Columbia	220
Yukon Territory	--	
Economic Immigrants Total		1 370
Refugees	Quebec	289
	Ontario	167
	Alberta	28
	British Columbia	21
Refugees Total		505
Other Immigrants	New Brunswick	--
	Quebec	140
	Ontario	231
	Manitoba	6
	Saskatchewan	--
	Alberta	26
	British Columbia	84
	Yukon Territory	--
Northwest Territories	--	
Other Immigrants Total		497
Permanent Residents (Mexico)		0
	Newfoundland and Labrador	--
	Prince Edward Island	--
	Nova Scotia	11
	New Brunswick	--
	Quebec	1 179
	Ontario	953
	Manitoba	85
	Saskatchewan	29
	Alberta	355
	British Columbia	478
Yukon Territory	5	
Northwest Territories	--	
Permanent Residents (Mexico) Total		3 104

Source: Citizenship & Immigration Canada, RDM, Facts and Figures 2009.

Table 3				
TOTAL ENTRIES OF MEXICANS TO CANADA BY LANDING CATEGORY, OCCUPATIONAL SKILL LEVEL (O, A, B) AND PROVINCE, 2009				
Landing Category	Immigration Class	Province	2009	
Family Class		Newfoundland and Labrador	–	
		Nova Scotia	–	
		Quebec	47	
		Ontario	62	
		Manitoba	–	
		Saskatchewan	–	
		Alberta	17	
		British Columbia	44	
Family Class Total			180	
Economic Immigrants		Newfoundland and Labrador	–	
		Prince Edward Island	–	
		Nova Scotia	–	
		Quebec	363	
		Ontario	160	
		Manitoba	8	
		Saskatchewan	10	
		Alberta	85	
	British Columbia	97		
Economic Immigrants Total			727	
Refugees	Refugees Landed in Canada	Ontario	–	
		British Columbia	–	
	Refugees Landed in Canada Total			–
	Refugee Dependants	Quebec	–	
		Ontario	–	
	Refugee Dependants Total			–
Refugees Total			8	
Other Immigrants		New Brunswick	–	
		Quebec	13	
		Ontario	19	
		Saskatchewan	–	
		Alberta	–	
		British Columbia	12	
		Northwest Territories	–	
Other Immigrants Total			49	
Permanent Residents (Total Skill Levels OAB-Mexico)			0	
		Newfoundland and Labrador	–	
		Prince Edward Island	–	
		Nova Scotia	6	
		New Brunswick	–	
		Quebec	424	
		Ontario	246	
		Manitoba	11	
		Saskatchewan	13	
		Alberta	104	
		British Columbia	155	
		Northwest Territories	–	
Permanent Residents (Skill Levels OAB-Mexico) Total			964	
Source: Citizenship & Immigration Canada, RDM, Facts and Figures 2009.				

Table 4
MEXICAN STUDENTS IN CANADA BY LEVEL OF STUDY, 2009

Level of Study	Province	2009
Secondary or Less	Newfoundland and Labrador	7
	Prince Edward Island	8
	Nova Scotia	104
	New Brunswick	41
	Quebec	141
	Ontario	387
	Manitoba	81
	Saskatchewan	22
	Alberta	154
	British Columbia	430
Secondary or Less Total		1 375
Trade	Prince Edward Island	--
	Nova Scotia	--
	New Brunswick	--
	Quebec	10
	Ontario	49
	Manitoba	--
	Alberta	12
	British Columbia	125
Trade Total		201
University	Newfoundland and Labrador	--
	Nova Scotia	6
	New Brunswick	--
	Quebec	116
	Ontario	101
	Manitoba	10
	Saskatchewan	11
	Alberta	63
		British Columbia
	Province not stated	--
University Total		424
Other Post-secondary	Newfoundland and Labrador	--
	Prince Edward Island	--
	Nova Scotia	--
	New Brunswick	--
	Quebec	14
	Ontario	59
	Manitoba	6
	Alberta	34
	British Columbia	350
Other Post-secondary Total		471
Other	Quebec	45
	Ontario	200
	Saskatchewan	--
	Alberta	--
	British Columbia	32
Other Total		284
Foreign Students (Mexico)		0

Table 4
MEXICAN STUDENTS IN CANADA BY LEVEL OF STUDY, 2009
(continuation)

Level of Study	Province	2009
	Newfoundland and Labrador	12
	Prince Edward Island	11
	Nova Scotia	115
	New Brunswick	44
	Quebec	326
	Ontario	796
	Manitoba	99
	Saskatchewan	34
	Alberta	269
	British Columbia	1 048
	Province not stated	--
Foreign Students (Mexico) Total		2 755

Source: Citizenship & Immigration Canada, RDM, Facts and Figures 2009.

Table 5
ENTRIES OF MEXICAN MIGRANTS TO CANADA IN 2009,
ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION AND PROVINCE

Province	Skilled migrants						Unskilled migrants						No skill level declared		Ratio: Qualified / Not qualified				
	0 - Managerial		A - Professional		B - Skilled and Technical		Total		C - Intermediate and Clerical		D - Elemental and Labourers		Total		#	%	Total	%	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%							
Newfoundland And Labrador	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8	6.00	
Prince Edward Island	0	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	—	—	1	0.01	—	6	0.25	
Nova Scotia	—	—	39	—	51	0.28	—	—	18	—	18	—	36	0.20	—	7	0.04	94	1.42
New Brunswick	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	0.02	18	0.25
Quebec	14	0.65	61	1.78	119	0.65	2 561	13.94	5	0.37	69	0.37	2 566	13.94	69	0.37	2 756	0.05	
Ontario	33	1.40	140	1.78	327	1.78	9 054	49.44	45	0.90	165	0.90	9 099	49.44	165	0.90	9 593	0.04	
Manitoba	—	—	14	0.10	18	0.10	—	—	—	—	46	0.25	20	0.11	85	0.39	—	—	
Saskatchewan	—	—	23	0.17	31	0.17	65	0.53	32	0.25	11	0.06	97	0.53	20	0.11	139	0.32	
Alberta	16	0.76	183	1.49	275	1.49	1 024	8.74	584	0.72	132	0.72	1 608	8.74	132	0.72	2 017	0.17	
British Columbia	15	0.63	63	1.21	222	1.21	2 702	15.37	127	1.15	211	1.15	2 829	15.37	211	1.15	3 266	0.08	
Yukon Territory	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	1	0.01	—	—	
Northwest Territories	0	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	0	—	0	—	0	0.00	0	0.00	—	—	
Province not stated	0	—	—	—	—	—	409	2.22	—	—	—	—	409	2.22	—	—	—	—	
Total	86	3.64	606	5.74	1 056	5.74	15 886	90.80	824	6.26	626	3.40	16 710	90.80	626	3.40	18 403	0.06	

Source: Citizenship & Immigration Canada, RDM, Facts and Figures 2009