

# United Nations Global Compact for Migration

Written by DAVID TILSON

On Dec. 4, 2018, the Leader of the Official Opposition, Andrew Scheer, announced the Conservatives' opposition to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's plan to make Canada a signatory to the United Nations Global Compact for Migration (GCM), which is a UN-led effort to set international standards and responsibilities around migration. On the surface, the pact appears to be a sensible and shared approach to international migration. However, when examined more closely, there are serious issues with the GCM, which we, the Conservative Official Opposition, have pointed out to the current Liberal government to no avail.

Conservatives have always stood up for secure borders and a safe and orderly immigration system. We believe Canada must be in control of our borders and have full autonomy over who enters our country. This is why we strongly oppose Canada signing on to the GCM. Canadians and Canadians only should make the decisions on who comes into the country and under what circumstances, not foreign entities like the UN.

Some of the issues for serious concern with the GCM include: i) the United Nations and International Organization for Migration officials provided conflicting and unclear testimony at the Immigration Committee when questioned on why Canada should sign the GCM; ii) the government admits non-binding agreements like the GCM can become customary international law and inform the interpretation of domestic law; iii) Canadian judges have cited these kinds of agreements in their decisions before: *Baker v Canada* [1999] 2 SCR 817, *R v Hape* [2007] 2 SCR 292, and *Ordon Estate v. Grail* [1998] 3 SCR 437; iv) costs associated with signing onto the GCM, or measures relating to implementing the GCM, are unknown and the current Liberal government hasn't provided any cost estimates; and v) the GCM contains troubling language around sensitizing and educating journalists on how they should report about immigration. Conservatives believe Canadian journalists should be free to scrutinize the government on immigration policy without influence from an international body.

Mr. Scheer introduced a unanimous consent motion calling on the government to not sign onto the GCM, which the current Liberal government defeated. He also said a Conservative government under his leadership would withdraw Canada from the GCM should the Liberals commit to it.

We, the Conservative Official Opposition, are not alone in our concerns with the GCM. The United States has expressed opposition to the pact and didn't sign the initial agreement earlier this year. Australia more recently withdrew its support of it even though it played a considerable role in its drafting. Countries, such as Poland, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Slovakia have rejected the GCM. Austria has also said it won't sign onto the agreement, while the Prime Minister of Belgium has expressed his support of the pact; however, his coalition partner has taken the opposite position and warned that if the government proceeded forward, his support would be withdrawn.

Instead of committing Canada to multinational migration agreements which infringe on our sovereignty, the Prime Minister should focus on fixing the crisis he created at the Canada-US border. The Parliamentary Budget Officer recently confirmed that, if left unaddressed, this crisis will cost taxpayers \$1.1 billion by 2020, not including the hundreds of millions of dollars incurred by the provinces.

The United Nations Global Compact for Migration is problematic on several grounds and does not have unanimous support from the global community. Prime Minister Trudeau and the current Liberal government should be focused on addressing the crisis of their own making here at home instead of signing onto this pact. Conservatives have a strong track record of capably and compassionately managing our immigration system by putting the world's most vulnerable first and we will continue to do so.