

Canada's illegal border crossings keep going up

by David Tilson

A couple of weeks ago, I was in Ottawa for emergency meetings of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, of which I am a Member, to discuss the influx of illegal border crossings at our southern border. Bill Blair, Toronto's former police chief and until recently Justin Trudeau's point man on cannabis, had just been sworn in as the Minister for Border Security. Mr. Blair, along with the Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale and Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen, was appearing at the meetings. I want to update you on the latest on this important file.

It is interesting to note that Minister Blair isn't actually in charge of anything. The RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency ? the two primary agencies responsible for security at our border ? continue to report directly to Minister Goodale. The machinery of our immigration system, including the Immigration and Refugee Board, which determines who is and who is not a genuine refugee, continue to report to Minister Hussen. So Bill Blair got a nice raise, a fancy title, some staff, a car and driver but not much else. So much for border security.

Also at the meeting was Lisa MacLeod, the Minister responsible for immigration in Ontario's new government. Minister MacLeod and others made it clear that the cost for housing and social services that Ontario has had to assume as a result of the feds moving border crossers from Quebec to Toronto, Ottawa and elsewhere are not sustainable without direct federal financial assistance.

The province has formally requested \$200 million from Ottawa; however, the response has been only \$11 million to date.

You may have read that some 800 border crossers were being housed in college dorms in Toronto, but that they had to be out by the 9th of August due to returning students. The solution that was arrived at? They are being put up in hotels. Initially, the feds only promised to pay for this temporary stop-gap until September 30, but the federal Minister responsible for housing, Jean-Yves Duclos, has now said they will continue to pay these costs into the foreseeable future.

This reinforces the Conservatives' point that the feds don't really have a plan in place and are simply throwing your tax dollars at the problem.

At the actual border, we are seeing a new tactic. A member of a family will cross at Roxham Road in Quebec, where the vast majority of crossings take place, and claim asylum. This makes them the anchor relative for the family. Other members of the family will later cross at a regular port of entry.

Normally they would be turned back and be told to claim asylum in the US, however the safe third country agreement with the US doesn't apply in this case, because they already have a relative - the one who crossed illegally - in the country with an ongoing asylum claim and thus the rest of the family is granted entry. The system is being gamed and the Liberals are unable to keep up.

One final point of interest is that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has recently reported that the federal government spent over \$270 million on illegal border crossers over the past year and a half. With wait times for refugee determination hearings going up, these costs are not going away anytime soon.

In typical Liberal fashion, the government will in all likelihood continue to throw more of your tax dollars at the problem.