

What is our immigration policy?

EDITORIAL

Although Canada has a reputation as a country that, unlike the United States, welcomes immigration, we don't know what our government requires of someone seeking to become an immigrant and eventually a Canadian citizen.

Supporting the reputation is the fact that at roughly the same time Donald Trump was banning Syrian refugees as potential terrorists, Canada was welcoming them, with an estimated 52,000 having been received since the October 2015 election that saw the Liberals led by Justin Trudeau end 10 years of Conservative rule. (And to date we've not heard of any of the 52,000 being an alleged terrorist.)

However, today we seem to have a lack of consistent government policy when it comes to considering applications from three different classes of migrants ? refugee claimants, asylum seekers and ordinary applicants.

There must be an element of irony in the fact that at a time when Toronto Mayor John Tory is calling on the federal and provincial governments to help in providing shelter for thousands of refugees and asylum seekers, a sponsorship group based in Dufferin-Caledon riding finds itself pleading with Mr. Trudeau for help in securing the admission to Canada of a young Syrian who would seem to be the perfect candidate for Canadian citizenship.

As you'll see elsewhere in this week's Citizen, Ann Lay, a member of the sponsorship group, has written the Prime Minister advising him that in the 40 years she has spent assisting refugees, ?I have never met a situation such as this.?

In the letter she advised the PM that her group, formed 2 1/2 years ago, would sponsor the admission of ?Elias?, who has relatives in Caledon and would be housed and employed on his arrival.

But when she had gone to the Orangeville office of Dufferin-Caledon MP David Tilson, ?to my horror I was told they contacted the Embassy and was told this young man had not suffered enough to qualify as a refugee.?

From what we have learned about the Syrian civil war, it would seem inconceivable that any resident of Aleppo, an ancient city that bombing has left in ruins, would not qualify for refugee status.

In Elias' case, the bombing has destroyed his parents' bakery and the family church. (Before the civil war broke out in 2011, Aleppo had a sizable Christian minority, but most of them have fled the city.)

Undoubtedly, the hope is that Elias, once settled here, would be able to assist his family and maybe one day bring them to Canada.

In the circumstances, we think the Trudeau government should make it clear, once and for all, just what qualities anyone wishing to emigrate here should have.

We would hope that the ideal candidate would be able to speak either English or French, have relatives in Canada and not become a burden on the Canadian taxpayer.

In Elias' case, he apparently has a reasonable command of English, as well as the promise of lodging and a job ? in other words, just about everything an immigrant from England or Ireland would have had a century ago.

We're left wondering what possible reason could there be for even a moment's hesitation in granting his application to start a new life in Canada, either as a refugee or as an ordinary applicant.

Should Mr. Trudeau not see fit to intervene, we would hope that once Parliament is in session, Mr. Tilson will raise the matter in the

Commons with either Mr. Trudeau or Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen.

One would hope that Mr. Hussen would have some sympathy, since he was born and raised in Somalia and immigrated to Canada as a teenager in 1993, two years after his parents fled from the Somalian civil war.