Conservatives propose sweeping amendments to border law Bill C-12

Conservatives announced a sweeping suite of amendments aimed at strengthening border security and disincentivizing immigration fraud in response to the Liberals' border security act, Bill C-12.

CLAYTON DEMMARIE, TRUE NORTH
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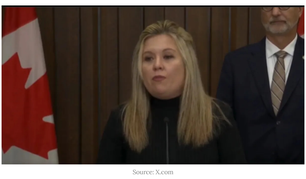

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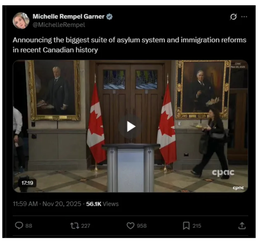
Conservatives announced a sweeping suite of amendments aimed at strengthening border security and disincentivizing immigration fraud in response to the Liberals' border security act, Bill C-12.

Conservative immigration critic Michelle Rempel Garner revealed a host of amendments to the Act in Ottawa on Thursday. Rempel Garner is calling it the "biggest suite of asylum system and immigration reforms in recent Canadian history."



The amendments include banning all healthcare benefits for asylum claimants who've been rejected in their refugee status request process, barring asylum claims from individuals originating from G7 or EU countries, enhancing screening requirements, and requiring schools accepting asylum claimants to provide funding transparency.

She said Bill C-12 "fails to disincentivize" bogus claims and grants "generous social benefits," such as healthcare, housing, and other social benefits to those who are engaging in bogus asylum requests.

Rempel Garner said a number of the 16 amendments would help "truly fix" Canada's "broken asylum system" by reducing the incentives for people to make fraudulent claims, making it harder to make fraudulent claims to begin with, processing claims more efficiently, and making it easier to remove people "with no legal reason" to be in Canada.

The amendments would require any asylum claims from individuals who have returned to their home country which they are allegedly seeking asylum from to be immediately abandoned. If a claimant is found to have lied to an officer, their claims would also be terminated.

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Conservatives want to place the onus on claimants to prove that they made their claim in a timely manner, rather than on the government.

To address an issue revealed this week in a committee that asylum seekers are not required to provide the full reason for seeking asylum and can enter the country with a phone app called "One Touch," Conservatives would legislate that asylum claimants have to immediately provide, on record, their "full grounds for seeking protection."

The amendments would also require the government to disclose the amount of federal benefits given to asylum claimants and "modernize" the Immigration and Refugees Board's appointment process to include more "merit-based candidates" and have individuals with law-enforcement experience.

"The IRB currently faces no real consequences for flawed decisions or persistent backlogs that harm Canadians, and its appointments remain heavily politicized," Rempel Garner said.

Rempel Garner also criticized the Liberal government's practice of allowing criminals to receive lenient sentencing for serious criminal acts to mitigate their chances of deportation. She noted that Canadian citizens do not receive lenient sentences.

She said the term "serious criminality" in the "outdated" Immigration and Refugee Protection Act would be clarified to mean the conviction of any indictable offence.

The amendments would also remove non-citizens' right to ask for a "pre-removal assessment" after being denied in their refugee claim unless "substantial new evidence of changed circumstances were presented." Immigration experts such as Sergio Karas have noted that the use of these processes could allow fraudulent claimants to remain in the country for years, further burdening an already backlogged system.

"All of our amendments are designed to be common sense, rooted in needs exposed by recent news reports, and designed to be supportable by all political parties – including the Liberals," Rempel Garner said. "Most importantly, they are designed to restore order, fairness, and public confidence to the immigration system."

While answering a question from the media, she added that Canadians are losing faith in the immigration system, but that she believes it's important not to blame immigrants themselves for the issues caused by the system. She said that "the finger should be squarely pointed at the Liberal government."

She noted that the U.K.'s left-wing Labour government is introducing sweeping immigration and asylum claim reforms amid a crisis, but that Canada's numbers are worse. She noted that between January 2022 and October of this year, the United Kingdom had around 375,000 people enter the country and make asylum claims, representing about 0.5 per cent of their population. During the same time frame, Canada has had nearly 496,000 claims, or roughly 1.2 per cent of our population today.

"If the Liberals are serious about restoring that public confidence, we've done our job as an opposition," Rempel Garner said. "I certainly hope that the Liberals steal these ideas, because we're right on the precipice in Canada right now, especially if you watch what's happening in the UK, knowing that our numbers are actually both by percentage and absolute numbers worse here, things need to change."

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Michelle Rempel is doing an amazing job as shadow immigration minister! She is doing all the hard work so hopefully the Liberals will steal her work and make the necessary changes.
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