Throughout our history, Canada’s immigration policy has brought people here who had a pathway to citizenship. It has been supported by political parties of all stripes, and promoted by successive governments over generations. Those who have made Canada their new home were — and are — nation builders.

Our future success is largely driven by attracting talented people from around the world. Our diversity not only brings its own economic and social rewards, but with Canada’s aging population, having a robust, effective, and efficient immigration system is critical to our long-term economic growth. Canada’s diversity and connections to the world are amongst our greatest economic assets in an increasingly inter-connected global economy.

During the Harper decade, our immigration system has been mismanaged, politicized, and re-oriented away from welcoming those who choose to make Canada their new and permanent home. Instead, this Conservative government has more than doubled the number of temporary foreign workers who are granted access to Canada in order to meet short-term labour market needs.

The results of Harper’s immigration mismanagement are as troubling as they are heartbreaking: refugees denied health care; the rights of religious minorities taken away during citizenship ceremonies; processing times doubled for family class immigrants and citizenship applicants; children kept from their parents; second-class citizenship created for those with dual citizenship; retroactive rule changes that treat people unfairly; and a failure to accept a sufficient number of refugees from Syria and the surrounding region.

We need a new plan for our immigration system that is grounded in compassion and economic opportunity for all. We can fix the problems created during the Harper decade, so that immigrants can build a new life for themselves in Canada and contribute to the economic success of all Canadians.

A Liberal government will renew and expand a safe, secure, and humane refugee program for Canada. This
begins by taking immediate steps to provide leadership in the refugee crisis in Syria and the surrounding region. We will:

- Expand Canada's intake to 25,000 refugees from Syria and Iraq through immediate, direct sponsorship by the government of Canada. We will also work with private sponsors to intake even more.

- Invest an additional $200 million over this fiscal year and next to increase – without reducing health and safety standards – refugee processing, as well as sponsorship and settlement services capacity in Canada.

- Provide an immediate $100 million new contribution to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to support the critical relief activities in the region.

Additional improvements we will make to Canada's refugee system include:

- Fully restoring the Interim Federal Health Program.

- Establishing an Expert Human Rights Panel for determination of designated countries of origin and to provide a right to appeal refugee decisions for citizens from these countries. This panel will include representatives from international human rights groups.

- Ending the practice of appointing individuals without subject matter expertise to the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada.

A Liberal government will make family reunification one of its core immigration priorities, because when families are able to stay together, their integration to Canada and ability to work and grow their communities all improve. Immediate steps will include:

- Nearly doubling the budget for family class immigration processing, in order to restore processing times to the levels achieved before the Harper decade.

- Doubling the number of new applications allowed each year, for parents and grandparents, from 5,000 to 10,000.

- Providing greater access to applicants with Canadian siblings, by granting additional points under the Express Entry system. We will also conduct a review of the program, ensuring that processing times are efficient.

- Restoring the maximum age for dependents to 22 instead of 19, allowing Canadians – often live-in caregivers – to bring their children to Canada.

- Granting immediate permanent residency to new spouses entering Canada, rather than imposing a two-year conditional status that puts spouses – often women – in a position of extreme vulnerability.

We will repeal the unfair elements of Bill C-24 that create second-class citizens and the elements that make it more difficult for hard-working immigrants to become Canadian citizens.

We will restore the residency time credit for foreign students and other temporary residents applying to become Canadian citizens. We will make changes to the Canadian Experience Class to reduce the barriers to
immigration that have been imposed on international students.

Eliminate the $1,000 Labour Market Impact Assessment fee for families seeking caregivers to care for family members with physical or mental disabilities.

We will reverse the roadblocks that the Harper Conservatives have needlessly added to the immigration system – roadblocks that have created unnecessary inconveniences and costs for Canadians and Canadian businesses. This will include removing the new visa requirement imposed on Mexico, and studying the implications of phasing out new visa requirements for several other countries as well.

We will work with provincial and territorial governments to improve regulation of the remittance industry, so that residents of Canada who send money overseas to help family members are not gouged by high fees. This will include working with Canada’s banks to ensure low-cost access to transfer services, exploring ways for Canada Post to offer remittance services, and imposing tough new penalties on those who abuse the system and take advantage of vulnerable newcomers to Canada.

We will work with the provinces and territories to develop a system of regulated companies to hire caregivers on behalf of families. This will enable caregivers to change employers in the case of bad relations or abuse, and it will relieve families of the need to navigate a complex bureaucracy in order to hire caregivers.