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**LEI**

Lei is a 24-year-old woman from [China[http://images.intellitxt.com/ast/adTypes/mag-glass_10x10.gif](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/time-to-lead/multiculturalism/meet-fictional-immigrant-lei/article1743209/)](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/time-to-lead/multiculturalism/meet-fictional-immigrant-lei/article1743209/) who wants to move to Toronto. An engineering graduate, she’s had trouble finding a job and has heard there’s lots of work in Canada. To start, she’s been offered a minimum-wage job at her uncle’s Chinatown store. Lei knows she would have to work her way up, but believes she’d eventually get a job in engineering. She speaks rudimentary English, but isn’t worried because her uncle says that you can get by speaking only Chinese in Toronto. Lei, who is excited about Canada’s wide open spaces, would leave behind her boyfriend, who also hopes to emigrate to Canada some day.

**LEI**

**Martin Collacott:** If she doesn’t speak much English, she’s in real trouble and maybe she doesn’t realize that. This is one of the problems of selection with our system. ... If you don’t speak enough English to function in the area of work you want to go into, you’re going to be out of luck. The fact that we give them a visa because they may have good degrees, but if they don’t speak enough English, they’re going to have a very difficult time here. She will be washing dishes or doing whatever in her uncle’s Chinatown store. She’s going to have a tough time ... also because there are probably too many engineers here now and too many more coming in. But you keep hearing that we have all these shortages, which is to some extent propaganda by the immigration industry. They’re not shortages immigrants are likely to fill, except maybe for doctors.

**Sharryn Aiken**: I think she could make an ideal immigrant to Canada. She’s young, she’s educated. It’s clear she’s motivated in terms of coming to Canada. We’ve also been told, and this is critical, that she’s going to be coming into a situation where she’s got a family network. Her uncle owns a store. She’s been offered a job there. Although it’s only [minimum wage[http://images.intellitxt.com/ast/adTypes/mag-glass_10x10.gif](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/time-to-lead/multiculturalism/meet-fictional-immigrant-lei/article1743209/)](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/time-to-lead/multiculturalism/meet-fictional-immigrant-lei/article1743209/) and clearly not in her line of work, it sounds like she doesn’t mind that and that she’s willing to work her way up. That’s the classic story that many newcomers or their descendents experienced, particularly in the past: Coming to Canada, often with significant education and experience, having to give that up, start all over again, but through dint of hard work, ultimately succeeding. There’s no reason to think that Lei wouldn’t be successful.

 **DEEPAK**

Deepak is a 28-year-old man from India who plans to move to Brampton, Ont. He has a medical degree from a prestigious Indian school and has heard about Canada’s shortage of physicians. Despite not knowing anyone in the Toronto area, he figures he’d easily get a job as a family doctor, confident his perfect English would help. Deepak’s parents are trying to find a wife who would join him, but he doesn’t want an arranged marriage. For him, coming to Canada would mean the chance to embrace new customs and start a new life. He admires Canadians’ sense of justice and equality and yearns to become a respected professional in such a society.

**Sharryn Aiken**: This is a person who’s clearly intelligent, likely to be adaptable. And although he doesn’t have family, he’d be coming into a situation in Brampton, Ontario, which has a large Indo-Canadian community that he could certainly access and derive support from. So that would all be fine. But I would express more concerns for Deepak because it’s not easy to be a foreign-trained doctor and actually become licensed to practice, particularly in Ontario. The question I would have for him is this somebody who’s going to be willing do something else? It’s funny because he’s got the kind of background that our current points system loves. He speaks perfect English, has multiple degrees presumably, certainly is young enough to qualify and get maximum points for his age. But is this person actually going to get to work as doctor and if he doesn’t what will that happen to his sense of justice and equality that he thinks Canada has? I think our points system is skewed in favour of too many Deepaks and not enough Leis.

**Martin Collacott**: In principle, he sounds like he could be a productive, useful addition to Canadian society. But doctors haven’t had such an easy time getting the right credentials and qualifications in Canada. He should come here, but that doesn’t mean it’s going to be a smooth ride or that he’s going to be able to practice as a doctor. I think it undermines the credibility of our selection process. It certainly will frustrate him personally. It’s a waste of human skills and perhaps human skills that we need. I can understand him feeling rather resentful. The economic situation will impact on his feeling of identity from a social point of [view[http://images.intellitxt.com/ast/adTypes/mag-glass_10x10.gif](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/time-to-lead/multiculturalism/meet-fictional-immigrant-deepak/article1743248/)](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/time-to-lead/multiculturalism/meet-fictional-immigrant-deepak/article1743248/). If he’s unable to [integrate] economically, I guess he’ll have some reservations about feeling really part of the Canadian fabric.

 **MARICEL**

Maricel is a 40-year-old woman from the Philippines who has an offer to work as a live-in nanny for an anglophone family in Montreal. Working abroad is Maricel’s only option for lifting her own family out of poverty: Her husband has been unemployed for the past year and their two children’s education is suffering. But Maricel is worried about the toll the separation would take on her family. After two years in Canada, she would start the process of bringing over her husband and kids. Maricel speaks fluent English and is a nurse. Deeply Catholic, she hopes to find a church and make new friends.

**Martin Collacott**: The problem I have with that program is, to make the deal sweeter for the person coming over to work long hours at low pay, we let them become permanent residents. And very often they simply wouldn’t have qualified as a regular immigrant. They’re using this system simply to try and get permanent residency status without meeting the normal requirements. And the result is that a lot of them live in poverty. Her husband hasn’t got employment in the Philippines, he’s probably even less likely to get it here. If you’ve got severe economic problems all the time, it can be disruptive and it can disadvantage the kids in terms of having the full opportunities of growing up in Canadian society. People in that situation – it’s described by one American think tank as basically importing poverty. You’re bringing in people because they’ll work for long hours at low pay, but you’re creating impoverished situations which may wash over into the next generation.

**Sharryn Aiken**: For Maricel, there’s a couple of issues. One is the fact that she’s 40. The transition out of the live-in caregiver sector to professional occupation is not an easy one for many people. The older they are when they come to Canada, often the more challenging it is. Most employers who employ caregivers do not allow their workers time off to upgrade their skills during those two years. And that’s a key issue. The other thing is how long it takes to be reunited with the family. In order for the sponsorship application to go through, definitely the individual needs to still be working, they can’t be on employment insurance or on social assistance. I would just say yes we should take Maricel, but this is a program that I think does more for Canada and less for the worker. I would prefer to do away with this program and admit caregivers as permanent residents – just like other skilled workers.

 **AISHA**

Aisha is a 15-year-old girl from Pakistan who wants to move to Surrey, B.C. She didn’t finish secondary school and doesn’t speak English, but hopes to take an ESL class. She is being sponsored by her father, who moved to Canada a decade ago and sent for her after her mother died. Aisha is excited about the idea of living in the West and wants to make friends and see American movies. But she’s a bit apprehensive about living with her father, who works as a line cook. He’s become more pious since leaving Pakistan and she knows he’ll want her to wear the hijab and shield her from Western cultural influences.

**Sharryn Aiken**: She’s young and she wants to come to Canada to live with her father. First of all, family sponsorship of a dependent child is a right. But on the other hand, we can see there’s going to be a lot of problems here. Many Diaspora communities in Canada are actually more conservative than communities in the countries of origin. Diaspora communities have a way of becoming kind of frozen in time and resisting change. It looks like this may be a person who’s going to need a lot of support when she gets to Canada. We have settlement programs to provide that. We have schools with ESL programs. There’s no reason to suspect that she wouldn’t do well. She’ll learn English and she’ll adapt. But it looks like she’s going to have some problems at home. It’s sort of the clash of our multiculturalist values on the one hand and on the other hand wanting to promote standards of equality that permeate the entire country.

**Martin Collacott**: There is certainly a problematic case. She sounds like a very appealing young person, she’s ambitious, she values Canadian things and so on. But ... she’s probably going to have to live with her father. And there’s obviously major conflicts. You feel sympathetic to her in terms of her wishes and so on, but I would say that’s a recipe for disaster. The main conflict would be that people like her father come to Canada wanting the economic opportunities but thinking somehow they can live as they did back in their old country in terms of their family traditions. And it just doesn’t work in many cases. She wants to come here for all freedom western society has to offer and her father will see it just the opposite way.

 **TOM**

Tom is a 45-year-old man from [the United States[http://images.intellitxt.com/ast/adTypes/mag-glass_10x10.gif](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/time-to-lead/multiculturalism/meet-fictional-immigrant-tom/article1743267/)](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/time-to-lead/multiculturalism/meet-fictional-immigrant-tom/article1743267/) who plans to move his geological survey business to Calgary. Over the past few years, he’s worked with more and more Canadian clients and has decided to relocate to the heart of the Canadian oil patch, hoping it will help him expand his company. He isn’t worried about culture shock – in his frequent trips to Canada, he’s seen very few differences between the two countries. He would bring his wife, a stay-at-home mother, and their three children. But Tom and his family plan to keep their home in Texas and have no intention of applying for Canadian citizenship. At heart, they’ll always be American.

**Martin Collacott**: Tom’s an interesting case because he doesn’t want to apply for Canadian citizenship. It’s something that’s going to happen with two countries side-by-side with similar cultures. It’s very easy for him to retain an attachment to the United States. Our situation is almost unique with the United States to have two countries with almost identical cultures and similar political cultures where people can move back and forth [under NAFTA] quite easily and fit very easily into the job market. The fact that he [won't] become a Canadian suggests that he’s probably going to go back and retire in the United States.

**Sharryn Aiken**: Clearly this is somebody who’s going to be able to hit the ground running from a contribution-to-the-economy point of view. But on the other hand, we see a family that has no intention of applying for Canadian citizenship and wanting to maintain their home in Texas. The question that I would have about this family is really should we be making room in our program for people who really have no intention of making a long-term commitment to the country? Because after all, our [immigration[http://images.intellitxt.com/ast/adTypes/mag-glass_10x10.gif](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/time-to-lead/multiculturalism/meet-fictional-immigrant-tom/article1743267/)](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/time-to-lead/multiculturalism/meet-fictional-immigrant-tom/article1743267/) program is really premised on the notion that it’s about becoming citizens, unless you’re coming as a temporary worker. We put the resources in the program in order to expand the population base in Canada. Based on the current rules, I’d have no choice but to accept him. But I would be thinking to myself this is not really what our immigration program should be doing.