40 MILLION AND COUNTING
– Canada Hits a New Population Milestone

On June 16, our country hit a major landmark. **Statistics Canada** says that was when the nation's population reached 40 million.

"This is an exciting milestone for Canada," said Chief Statistician Anil Arora. "It is a strong signal that Canada remains a dynamic and welcoming country."

THE BIGGER PICTURE

The 40-million figure tells a bigger tale, too.

Canada's population is expanding faster than it has in decades. The nation's annual growth rate is 2.7 percent. That's the highest it's been since 1957. As a result, Canada is the fastest-growing **G7** country. If the nation keeps growing at this rate, the population could hit 50 million in just 20 years.

WE HELP OTHERS . . .

How to explain this massive population surge? It comes down to one word: **immigration**. In 2022 alone, Canada grew by over one million people. About 96 percent of this increase was due to people moving to Canada from other nations. That's more than twice the 430,000 **permanent residents** the federal government was expecting.

The numbers increased because Canada took in more **refugees** than planned. Many came from war-torn nations like Ukraine, Syria, and Afghanistan. Others came from Turkey and Syria

CANADA'S "POPULATION CLOCK"

How could Statistics Canada be so certain that the population hit 40 million on June 16? Did someone welcome the newest immigrant personally, or see the baby born who ushered in this landmark?

Not exactly. The number is just a highly educated guess. The federal government uses a "population clock" – a **statistical model** that estimates the current population. This model is based on birth, death, and immigration trends. The model also gauges the number of residents in every province and territory. As of mid-August, the population was estimated to be 40,253,321 (an increase of over 253,000 since June 16).

DEFINITIONS

G7 (THE GROUP OF SEVEN NATIONS): an organization of the world's seven most advanced economies: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the U.S.

IMMIGRATION: the process of coming to live permanently in a different country from the one you were born in

PERMANENT RESIDENT: someone who has immigrated to Canada but who hasn't yet become a full citizen

REFUGEE: a person forced to leave their country because there is a war or for political, religious, or social reasons

STATISTICAL MODEL: a mathematical process that attempts to describe and predict the population by taking samples of it

STATISTICS CANADA: a federal government agency that produces statistics to help better understand Canada and its population, resources, economy, society, and culture

after a huge earthquake last February destroyed homes in these nations.

Yet this **influx** of immigrants is just part of an ongoing trend. Some 40 percent of Canadian residents are already immigrants or children of immigrants. And in 20 years, immigrants will make up the majority of Canada's population.

. . .and they help us

Canadians have **humanitarian** reasons for accepting large numbers of immigrants. But we're also being practical.

Canada's current population is aging. In 1980, about six people were working for every retired person. By 2030, the ratio will be three to one. Meanwhile, the nation's birth rate has dropped substantially.

That means we risk not being able to replace the people leaving our **labour force**. With fewer workers, critical public services might suffer. Why? To fund schools, hospitals, and other **infrastructure,** the government relies heavily on the **income tax** that employed people pay.

As well, skilled newcomers fill our acute **labour shortages** in many fields, such as health care.

Canada is hoping immigration will help offset these problems. Many immigrants are young, so they'll pay into the public system for years to help support services. They're ambitious, too. The businesses they start and the purchases they make contribute to our **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**. Plus, they're often willing to relocate to small communities that benefit from their expertise.

The downside

Yet some observers have concerns about Canada's growing population. They point to housing as a major issue. Homes now sell for over $700,000 on average across the country. That's too costly for many people already living here. And there isn't enough housing for everybody at any price.

Another worry? At present, one in five Canadians doesn't have a family doctor. This shortage of medical care could worsen as the population ages and grows. What if the healthcare system stretches to the breaking point?

That could put people at risk. Roads could see more cars, too, adding to pollution. Schools could become overcrowded. Public transit could struggle to handle more passengers.

"If we want to do more immigration, fine, but let's have a suite of policies… that increase infrastructure investment for transit, housing, health care, [and] schools," said one expert.

Others are looking at the impact Canada's growth spurt is having on our present high level of **inflation**. Immigrants' need for consumer goods has pushed up demand, causing a shortage of these items. When demand exceeds supply, prices stay high.

Reasons to celebrate

So, there's a lot to navigate as our population grows. Yet many people believe it's worth pausing to mark this milestone.

"We are from far and wide, but united we are 40 million strong. There is no challenge we cannot overcome together," Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said. "So let's celebrate each other, and let's celebrate as we continue to build this great country." ★

DEFINITIONS

gross domestic product (gdp): the total value of all the goods and services produced by a country in one year
humanitarian: connected with helping people who are suffering and improving the conditions that they are living in
income tax: the amount of tax that you pay to the government according to how much you earn

inflation: a fall in the value of money and a general increase in prices; the rate at which this happens
influx: a lot of people, money, or things arriving somewhere
infrastructure: the systems that keep a country running smoothly: buildings, transport, water, and power
labour force: all the people who work in a country
labour shortage: when there are more jobs than workers