

## Destination Canada – Part two

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There is a growing perception that Canada is suffering a substantial and economically damaging due to "brain drain" to primarily USA. In reality, the number of temporary migrants is relatively small and some portion of temporary migration is facilitating increased integration with the U.S. economy, and that, by itself, is a benefit to Canada. As well, some temporary Canadian immigrants are acquiring managerial and technical skills in U.S. companies that may impart benefit to the Canadian economy when those immigrants return to Canada. At the same time, survey results provide some grounds for concern to policymakers about the labor market environment for highly skilled workers in Canada

Majority of people in Canada works in a few sectors led by Service producing sector (11.5 million) and followed by Good producing sector (4 million), Manufacturing (2.35 million), Trade (2.5 million), Professional services (1 million), Educational services (1 million), Health care services (1.6 million) etc. It is also interesting to notice that Canada has 2.4 million self-employed people a majority of who are new immigrants.

The skilled immigrants from the less developed countries who can't find a job here according to their expectations are forced to work in places where they would have never worked in normal situation. A little observation reveals that most of these highly educated and skilled professionals ends up working in manufacturing plants where they are usually paid anywhere between CAN\$ 10 – 14, much lower than what they would have made in their respective fields (CAN \$25 and up). But it is never just the money that really matters. Most of these manufacturing plants, ranging from electric to automobile, has a different environment than that of an official job and may become very intimidating due to more demanding physical tasks which are also by nature repetitive, monotonous and hardly cognitive. And yet, currently there is a considerable shortage of these lowly paid, physically demanding jobs owing to the economical downturn that began sometime in the year 2000 due to bad investments by corporations, bankruptcies and corporate losses and was worsened by the 9/11 events. An economical shake up in USA can be felt very clearly in this part of the border too. Many manufacturing companies serving US large corporations faced with order withdrawals and scant of new orders from their clients and are forced to keep their operations very limited. Many are forced to juggle between various manufacturing plants to work on quick notice, allowing them to put on more hours and earn enough money to make a minimum living. But due to the fact that many new immigrants are in their middle age, working in the above environment may not be too feasible for them and a large portion ends up in the food services or store keeping jobs.

Roughly, there are about 25 thousand Bangladeshis in Canada, a large number of them are professionals who came here for a better and peaceful life and for a brighter future for their kids in a very advanced and rich country. While some of them have eventually found good jobs or a good means of living but many are struggling to break through the prevailing corporate tradition of offering jobs to only the professionals with a Canadian or USA degree or experience. Not too many exceptions can be found.

A good number of Bangladeshi professionals have lost their hope of going back to official jobs and either they are continuing to work in other type of jobs or taking the other option – going back to school. Canadian government has a system of providing loans to college students through a program called OSAP. Usually when enrolled the amount of loan is sufficient to lead a normal life while continuing study. The loan repayment conditions are very friendly and usually kick in after securing a job. The system also allows no interest grace periods during the time of graduation and getting a job. Many new immigrants including Bangladeshis, especially the young ones take this opportunity and eventually succeed in getting into the job market of their choice.

Canada has a predominantly publicly-financed, privately-delivered health care system known to Canadians as Medicare. It provides access to universal, comprehensive coverage for medically necessary hospital, in-patient and out-patient physician services. Most doctors are private practitioners who work in independent or group practices, enjoy a high degree of autonomy, and are generally paid on a fee-for-service basis. The responsibilities regarding healthcare system is shared by federal government and the provincial and territorial governments for maximum efficiency.

In layman's words what it means is, Canadians and landed immigrants in Canada are blessed with a good an excellent health care system which with the exception of prescription drug and dental and optical care is

totally free to the patient. There are quite a few private health care providers who offer varieties of medical plans covering prescription drug and dental and optical coverage. But, usually these plans are a little expensive and average Canadians or immigrants happily live without them, paying cash in case of necessity. Overall, the Canadian health care system is enviable to the average American who, while by law would get medical service from any hospital in case of an emergency, may actually end up paying for it in the long run as installments. They are usually left to have medical coverage offered by the health care providers for a handsome fee, either through their jobs or personally. Understandingly a good number of Americans do not have any sort of health care coverage (rose from 39.8 million in 2000 to 41.2 million in 2001, according to new findings from the Census Bureau).

Both Canada and USA provide some sort of tax benefit for children, which largely and appropriately benefits the low, modest to middle-income families with kids. In Canada, CCTB (Canada Child Tax Benefit) provides annual financial assistance to families with children. It has two key components: the CCTB base benefit and National child benefit supplement. As of July 2001, the maximum CCTB benefits became \$2,372 for the first child and \$2,172 for each subsequent child. Nationally, the CCTB would provide close to \$7.7 billion to 3.2 million families. It's notable that the benefit decreases proportionately with increasing gross family earnings ensuring that the rich or well off families do not have a cut in it. Naturally, most new immigrant families with children welcome this assistance from Canadian government in addition to free schooling up to high school. To them in the initial days of hardship every bit helps.

According to 1991 Censuses, Canada is a predominantly Christian where Roman Catholics (45.7%) and Protestants (36.2%) makes up the majority. Among other religions besides other forms of Christianity are Islam (.9%), Jewish (1.2%), Sikh (.5), Hindu (.6), Buddhist (.6) etc. Considering the fact that these minority religious groups in average had experienced an increase of .2% and more within the period 1981 to 1991, it can safely be assumed the today in 2002, their total must have grown considerable since 1991. It is also of interest to notice that about 12.5% Canadians declared themselves as not having any religious affiliation.

Canada is considered as a safer country due to its lower crime rate. In 1999 the crime rate was the lowest in last 20 years and had dropped consistently for the last eight years. In 2001, though, Canada's police reported crime rate increased by 1%. The 2001 National crime rate was 7,747 criminal code incidents per 100,000 population. Among provinces Newfoundland & Labrador (5711) continued to have the lowest crime rate followed by Quebec (6027). Saskatchewan (12,730) had the highest crime rate, followed by British Columbia (11,253) and Manitoba (10,723).

Canada is an active trade partner of Bangladesh. The top three Canadian imports from Bangladesh in 2001 were (by merchandise classification) Knitted or crocheted apparel (41.5%), Woven clothing and apparel (40.2%), Other textile articles (8.4%). The main three Canadian exports to Bangladesh were (by merchandise classification) Edible vegetables, roots and tubers (40.9%), Cereals (40%) and Oil seeds and misc. fruit, grain, etc (6.4%). In general, imports from Bangladesh are dominated by clothing, and to a lesser extent, non-clothing textile items like yarn and tents. At the HS 6-digit level, only two of the top 25 imports from Bangladesh -- frozen shrimp and prawns, along with paper finishing machinery -- were not in this textiles class. Canadian exports to Bangladesh featured wheat, green peas and mustard seeds -- just as they have done in past years.

In 2001 Canada's total export was valued to be Can\$ 130,072,000 as oppose to total import of Can\$ 189,654,000 giving Bangladesh a net trade surplus of roughly Can\$ 59 million. Unfortunately, due to slower businesses worldwide in 2002 exports and imports both had shown a smaller number until August in this year. Canadian government has recently made an announcement of quota-free access of goods from the LDC's, including Bangladesh, into the Canadian market.

According to outgoing Canadian High Commissioner David Preston there are about 1000 Bangladeshi student now studying in different universities and colleges in Canada. More initiative is being taken to make the task easier for the interested students in getting admitted in Canadian universities and colleges and securing appropriate student visas. Considering the current tight situation in USA, Canada seems to be taking more interest in proving it to be a worthy destination for foreign students, which in turn would definitely bring more money and knowledge into the country, helping the economy.

<Bangladeshis in professions>

<Future of BD's>