

A Note for Ukrainian Immigrants to North America

Over the last few years since the Ukrainian nation declared its independence the character of Ukrainian immigration to Canada and the United States has changed. When the Soviet Union was still around Ukrainian immigration was characterized as a flight away from tyranny and repression. Refugee claims and special immigration options were made available to former Soviet citizens since such immigrants were rare as it was hard to get out of the Soviet Union. Those days are now gone and new immigration options have to be considered.

Today, making a refugee claim in Canada or the U.S. equivalent, an asylum claim, is an option of last resort. This is deceptive because the immediate consequences of such a step are very seductive: you are given official status in the country, you are given a work permit and sometimes are even entitled to benefit from some government support programs. But the long term consequences for anyone who does not have a provable credible fear of persecution based on his or her race, religion, political opinion, nationality or membership in a social group are devastating. All other immigration options are damaged by such a claim - particularly temporary options like work permits, student visas and visitor status. Few people understand that there is no such thing as a "refugee" from economic hardship or a "refugee" due to crime unless the government is directly to blame for the pertinent condition by creating it. In short, avoid claiming refugee status if at all possible. As to what immigration options you should pursue - that is the topic of a future article.

Let me address one last subject in this message. Many Ukrainian immigrants and others from Eastern Europe have been burnt in Canada and the US by immigration consultants who have taken money and made extravagant promises but failed to deliver what was promised. There are good reasons for such immigrants to stay away from such consultants who make exaggerated promises of success.

For one thing, lawyers are governed by a code of ethics and law societies and bar associations that enforce ethical behaviour. Lawyers are required to maintain secrecy and not share their client's information with anybody. Lawyers have been trained in the law and the procedure required to comply with what is required. They are bound by their code of conduct to make truthful representations to the government and to avoid misrepresentations that ultimately can destroy a case if uncovered. Finally, only lawyers are accredited to file immigration appeals in cases where applications have been rejected, so immigrants can correct legal errors and sometimes even can include humanitarian submissions to prevail in the Federal Courts or other immigration appeal tribunals.

These are all matters that distinguish lawyers from immigration consultants, "advisers" and "notary publics" or "notarios" working in this field. Not all lawyers are perfect, but the foregoing reasons suggest it makes good sense to use an immigration lawyer for your case. In short, be wary of paying big money, adopting "quick and easy solutions" and dealing with just anybody to handle your important immigration matters. Beware of

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rumours about how someone else succeeded and people who "know how to do immigration because they learned it themselves." More often than not, these are the ways to an unhappy future as far as immigration is concerned.

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As an attorney practicing both U.S. and Canadian immigration law, I help clients get work permits, permanent resident cards and passports. I am fast, accurate, and reliable so my clients save precious time, avoid extra effort and make more money.