

Asylum-Seeking Refugees Head To Canada In Greater Numbers

"They will make a dash ..."

by [Jeff Demers](#) February 7, 2017 at 8:39am

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In the aftermath of a hard fought U.S. presidential election and the subsequent inauguration of President Donald Trump, refugees are leaving the United States in growing numbers to seek asylum in Canada.

Manitoba's Welcome Place, the province's largest refugee settlement agency, helped 91 individuals seeking asylum between Nov. 1 and Jan. 25. This three month total represented more asylum seekers than the agency previously processes in a typical year.

Many of those the agency assisted braved the freezing prairie winter to walk into Canada, according to [Reuters reporting](#).

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"The U.S. presidential campaign, putting undocumented immigrants and refugees in the spotlight, terrified them," said one refugee processing counselor at Welcome Place.

"The election and inauguration of Mr. Trump appears to be the final reason for those who came mostly last month."

"We haven't had something before like this," said Maggie Yeboah, president of the Ghanaian Union of Manitoba, which has also aided refugees entering the province, "We don't know what to do."

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With a U.S. federal appeals court set to decide Tuesday [whether or not to restore](#) the president's controversial executive order barring refugees from seven countries from entering the United States, asylum seekers and others without formal documents to be in the United States have been in and out of legal limbo in the last seven days.

"They will make a dash for Canada, whether they are going to go through cold weather to die or not," said Abdikheir Ahmed, a Somali immigrant in Winnipeg who assists refugees in making asylum claims.

Some are entering Canada legally, others illegally, at points all along the U.S.-Canadian border.

The Canada Border Services Agency reported 7,000 refugee applicants entered Canada in 2016 through land ports of entry from the United States, a 63 percent increase from the prior year.

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2,000 additional refugees crossed the border "irregularly" within the same time window without official authorization.

At Vive, a refugee shelter across the border from Buffalo, New York, incoming refugee applicants have spiked by 200-300 percent compared to what they would normally see a year ago.

Currently the Canadian government only [has plans](#) for 7,500 government assisted refugees in 2017.

“Clients are definitely spooked by [Trump’s] executive orders,” said Vive’s Canadian service manager Mariah Walker.

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