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MOM - 'WHEN I GROW UP I WANT TO BE A REFUGEE...'

By Joe Ingino BA. Psychology
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I have seen firsthand the economic struggles many people are facing today—from those on the brink of eviction for unpaid rent, to families losing their homes to financial institutions unwilling to grant even a short extension. Across the country, the overall quality of life appears to be declining. Concerns about crime are rising, and the number of Canadians experiencing homelessness continues to grow at an alarming rate. This week, an announcement drew attention: Pickering to host an accommodation site for asylum seekers. According to Durham Region, a former hotel in Pickering is being converted into temporary housing for asylum seekers.

The federal government has provided funding for the purchase of the property; however, neither the total investment nor the projected operating costs have been publicly disclosed. The site will serve as the Durham Reception Centre. Let me be clear—I have no issue with immigration. I am an immigrant myself. I came to this country with the same goal shared by many others: to build a better life, respect the laws of the land, and contribute meaningfully to Canadian society. I recall being asked as a child what I wanted to be when I grew up. My answer never changed. I was inspired by the uniform of the RCMP and the idea of serving a country that had given my family so much. To contribute to that legacy felt like both an honour and a responsibility.

Today, however, I sometimes question whether that same sense of purpose is as widely shared. Canada has long been a nation built on diversity, but it has also relied on a shared commitment to integration, mutual respect, and civic responsibility. Increasingly, there are concerns about whether that balance is being maintained. At the same time, local governments are making significant financial commitments—such as the reported \$7 million allocated toward a reception centre in Durham Region. This raises difficult but important questions: how do we balance support for newcomers with the urgent needs of Canadians who are struggling to afford basic necessities like food and housing? Behind these issues are real people—our neighbours, our families, our fellow citizens. These are conversations worth having, and perspectives worth sharing.

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Parliament Is Not a Training Program

by Maj (ret'd) CORNELIU, CHISU, CD, PMSC
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At a time when Canada faces mounting economic pressure, geopolitical instability, and a troubling erosion of public trust, we should be asking a fundamental question: Who is governing us—and on what basis?

Being a Member of Parliament is not a learn-on-the-job position. It is not an internship, nor is it the natural next step after years spent as a political staffer.

It is a national responsibility that demands demonstrated competence, tested judgment, and real-world experience—long before one ever rises in the House of Commons.

Yet increasingly, we are normalizing a political pipeline that begins and ends within the same narrow ecosystem. Too many candidates today have spent their entire professional lives in politics—advising elected officials, crafting messaging, managing communications, and navigating internal party dynamics.

They understand process, certainly. However, process is not governance.

The distinction is not academic—it is consequential.

Canada is not a theoretical exercise. Decisions taken in Parliament affect livelihoods, national security, infrastructure, and the long-term trajectory of the country. Those decisions require more than familiarity with procedures or party discipline. They require the kind of judgment that is shaped only through experience where outcomes carry real consequences.

In engineering, failure is measurable and often unforgiving. In military operations, mistakes can carry immediate and irreversible costs. In business, poor decisions can mean lost jobs and shuttered enterprises. These environments cultivate a level of accountability and decisiveness that cannot be replicated through exposure to political process alone.

Parliament needs more of that grounding.

When legislators debate national defence, they should understand more than procurement terminology—they should grasp the realities of deployment, command, and risk.

When they legislate on infrastructure, they should know how projects are built, financed, and maintained.

When they shape economic policy, they should have firsthand experience with investment, payroll, and market uncertainty.

This is not an argument for exclusivity. It is an argument for competence.

A Parliament increasingly populated by career political operatives risks becoming insular, self-referential, and detached from the realities of the citizens it is meant to represent. It becomes a system that rewards message discipline over independent thinking, loyalty over leadership, and ambition over achievement.

Political staffers play an important and often demanding role. Many are intelligent, dedicated, and deeply committed to public service. However, staffing is apprenticeship, not qualification. It is preparation—not proof of readiness to assume the full weight of elected office.

Canada's strength has always rested on the diversity of experience brought into public life. Farmers who understand land and food systems. Entrepreneurs who understand risk and growth.

Engineers who understand infrastructure and systems.

Members of the armed forces who understand strategy and sacrifice.

Professionals who have lived with accountability beyond the political sphere.

That diversity is not incidental—it is essential.

When Parliament reflects a broad range of real-world experience, it is better equipped to legislate wisely, scrutinize effectively, and respond to the complex challenges of a modern nation.

When it does not, it risks becoming disconnected from the very people it serves.

Public trust in institutions cannot be rebuilt through messaging strategies or carefully crafted narratives. It is rebuilt when citizens recognize competence in those who govern them—when

they see individuals who have demonstrated judgment under pressure, delivered results in demanding environments, and contributed meaningfully before seeking office.

Being a Member of Parliament should be the culmination of a career of contribution—not its starting point.

Canada does not need more individuals who know how Ottawa works. It needs individuals who understand how the country works—how decisions affect communities, industries, and families across the nation.

That kind of understanding cannot be acquired solely within the confines of political life. It must be earned through experience, responsibility, and accountability outside it.

If we are serious about renewing our institutions and strengthening our democracy, we must be equally serious about the standards we expect of those who seek to lead.

If we continue to elect those who have only ever worked in politics, we should not be surprised when politics is all they know how to produce.

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