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Refugee lawyers alarmed by proposed sweeping changes in Strong Borders Act

The Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers (CARL) is alarmed by proposed changes to Canada's refugee protection system [announced yesterday](#). These sweeping changes will have drastic and harmful consequences that substantially restrict access to the refugee claim process, putting many vulnerable people at serious risk of harm.

“The amendments being proposed to Canada’s refugee system will have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups, including women who have experienced gender-based violence and members of the LGBTQ+ community, who may take more time to come forward to file a claim despite being at serious risk in their country of origin,” said CARL President Aisling Bondy. “These are also claimants who will be more prejudiced by a paper-based assessment.”

Shifting these newly ineligible claimants into the existing paper-based Pre-Removal Risk Assessment process and away from the specialized Immigration and Refugee Board is unfair. The proposed legislation contains no right to a hearing or to many of the other basic procedural safeguards provided for in the existing refugee claim system. The result will be more appeals and an increased backlog at the already overburdened Federal Court.

“The move to bar more refugee claimants from accessing the refugee status determination process in Canada is alarming and a move in the wrong direction,” said Adam Sadinsky, CARL Advocacy Co-Chair. “The government is pulling the rug out from people in Canada as students or workers and whose country conditions have changed making it dangerous for them to return.”

The retroactive application of the proposed provisions, including a one-year bar, is particularly detrimental in the face of other changes that have been made by Immigration in recent months, leaving many people without pathways to permanent residence. International students and migrant workers in Canada may face risk in their home countries but may first try to access permanent status in Canada through an economic pathway, which has become more difficult as Immigration caps permanent residence programs and restricts options for people to remain in Canada.

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