

The Benefits Vs. The Costs Of Illegal Immigration

Posted on October 16, 2018

Introduction to Sanctuary Cities

The debate over the benefits versus the costs of illegal immigration has been met by radical and conflicting opinions from across all quarters. There is a school of thought that majorly believes that the costs of creating sanctuary cities outweigh their usefulness. On the other hand, there is a class of economists who argue that the benefits of sustaining illegal immigrants can balance out the costs or that the costs to society are negligible compared to their benefits (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada [IRCC], 2024).

Origins and Development of Sanctuary Policies

However, the concept of sanctuary cities began in the 1970s with the aim of preventing law enforcement agencies from investigating an individual's identity. The wave has intensified in Canada in recent periods, where the government is protecting illegal immigrants by enacting laws or instilling habits and practices that shelter and harbor immigrants in the country. Therefore, this argumentative essay seeks to analyze the significance, advantages, and disadvantages of sanctuary cities in Canada (Gardner, 2023).

Sanctuary Cities in Canada

Canada has embraced the system of sanctuary cities to provide refuge for people from other countries. The establishment of the system enables the government to give the immigrants a conducive environment while also offering them protection as they undertake various activities. Currently, there are more than 70 sanctuary cities in Canada that aim to prevent law enforcers or the police from probing residents about their legal immigration status. In this way, sanctuary cities have proved efficient in minimizing the brutality of the law. This is quite critical because it enables undocumented immigrants to claim rights because of their immense contribution to the urban communities; a large population of economists regards them as a source of labor that runs the cities. For instance, these groups of people often organize school meetings and participate in community forums besides their various contributions to civic and public discourses within Canadian cities (City of Toronto, 2025).

Cities as Political Communities

These introduce the scale concern. Empirical studies suggest that it is not the nation but the city that should define a community. For instance, Benedict Anderson, an international scholar, made an observation nearly three decades ago that national communities are “imagined.” In his submission, Anderson claimed that national communities consist of a large population, and as a result, individuals cannot know or interact with each other on a personal basis. However, people often intermingle within a city in various ways, such as while commuting, shopping, working, and attending concerts, among other social undertakings that are capable of bringing individuals together. Therefore, he suggested that the municipal scale should take center stage in the organization of political communities because urban membership outranks national citizenship (Gardner, 2023).

Democratic Inclusion and Protection

Moreover, sanctuary cities focus on being the last bastion of safety for undocumented immigrants who yearn to be free. These systems envision cities as democratic spaces that are all-inclusive and where individuals’ opinions count and they have free will to participate in political discourse. The sanctuary cities, by their very nature, do not discriminate against some populations as either more deserving or unwanted based on their immigration status. It espouses that all city residents belong to the city, independent of their national status (Gardner, 2023).

Therefore, the section of people opposing the establishment of sanctuary cities in Canada reflects a people that are majorly struggling to strangle political inclusion and democracy, while the sanctuary cities stand apart as mitigating the influence of failed national policies. Whereas politicians and other pressure groups are challenging the very foundation of democracy, the cities are taking the bold step of defending the principles of inclusion and liberty within the local scale.

Social Justice and Equal Access

Sanctuaries promote social justice and equality. Besides being the last bastions of safety and providing an environment that enhances inclusion, sanctuary cities also focus on enabling equal access to municipal services without regard for an individual’s immigration status. This, in effect, is critical in ending the deeply entrenched divisive distinctions that characterize immigration status (City of Toronto, 2025). In connection to alleviating inequality, it is also important for the opponents to recognize the undocumented workers as taxpayers. It is well-known that undocumented immigrants pay their taxes through HST in many ways, such as paying rent, buying property, or making purchases, as well as through their income tax contributions since most of them often acquire citizens’ Social Insurance Numbers to be employed. Therefore, despite this group of people being denied services and benefits, they actively participate in underwriting the broader social system.

According to IRCC (2024), pegging rights and privileges on national citizenship provides the breeding ground for modern feudalism, where people are divided into different classes based on their citizenship status. Although this argument focuses primarily on justice and equality, it also has a far-reaching impact. For instance, the presence of exploitable undocumented immigrants offering labor reduces the costs of production and, hence, the costs of acquiring products and services.

Security-Based Criticisms

However, despite the significance of sanctuary cities, some counter-arguments form the demerits of these safe havens for undocumented immigrants. One of the major criticisms for these cities is pegged on security issues concerning the proliferation of terrorism in the modern day and age. Those opposed to the idea of the creation of sanctuary cities validly argue that the aliens potentially threaten Canadian national security. Besides, since the state does not document this group of people, most of them often pose crime-related threats to the government and the local citizens. It is also arguable that the presence of these cities is a source of pressure on national resources and social amenities. With the upsurge in the number of undocumented immigrants, it becomes a challenge for the government to plan effectively, thus making the available resources become too little for all people within the national boundaries (IRCC, 2024).

Public Safety and Community Trust

Moreover, the principal tenets for the existence of sanctuary cities are public trust and public safety. These are the same reasons that have made the presence of these sanctuaries uncontroversial until recently. It is widely believed across the spectrum that creating sanctuary cities cannot deliver a permanent solution to the problem of undocumented immigrants. It can only be said that it is a reactive measure that seeks to cover up the failures of the government to address immigration crises. For a lasting solution to emerge, the government and its policymakers must consider having a real and challenging conversation that focuses on overhauling the immigration system, securing borders, and establishing an elaborate scheme that spells out the persons eligible to enter and stay in Canada. However, in their current state and style of operation, sanctuary cities are legal but temporary measures. They are quite beneficial in the maintenance of public safety and are filling the void that emerged as a result of the longstanding incompetence of Congress. However, in building a lasting and sustainable solution to the problem of immigration crises, in the spirit of law and order, the government must embrace a comprehensive approach that will introduce far-reaching implications in the immigration system within the country (Hershkowitz et al., 2023).

Implementation Challenges

Despite the successful establishment of sanctuary cities in Canada, such as Toronto, advocates for

these cities have long started to complain about the insufficiency of the approach. For instance, some reports have declared Toronto's sanctuary city status a disappointment due to the integration and cooperation between the police and other law-enforcing federal agencies. It is also not a virtue to estrange the local police from enforcement measures designed by the federal government. In fact, experts warn that undertaking such a step is likely to weaken the admirable consensus of Canada's liberal immigration system (Hershkowitz et al., 2023; Ombudsman Toronto, 2024).

Conclusion

In conclusion, sanctuary cities are a new concept in Canada. As a result, implementing them requires adequate time to enhance the changing of the centuries' institutional cultures. Nonetheless, it is recognizable that change cannot happen in a vacuum. Therefore, cities need to outlay a concrete plan for allocating adequate resources and implementation. Besides, there is a need for intensive engagement with the locals to break down barriers and establish trust. Further, Canadian sanctuary cities must adopt case studies of San Francisco and New York, which issue municipal identity cards to immigrants to enable them to access municipal services. The authorities must recognize the growing sanctuary-city movements. Canada is also known for its community and humanitarian values. However, goodwill alone cannot run sanctuary-city policies. The city councils must, therefore, implement the necessary measures to curb future challenges (Gardner, 2023; City of Toronto, 2025).

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