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**NOTEBOOK**

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**World > Americas**  
from the December 07, 2004 edition

## Feeling blue in the blue states? Canada rolls out welcome mat

By **Susan Bourette** | *Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor*

**TORONTO** — Bippy McMaster's new home sits nestled on a mountainside in a town rich in US history - except it's in Canada. Ms. McMaster recently relocated to Nelson, British Columbia, where many Americans moved to protest the Vietnam War more than three decades ago.

McMaster had been thinking for some time about leaving her home in Guala, Calif., north of San Francisco. She says that family life is better in Nelson, with the whole town shutting down on Sundays to spend time with loved ones. The journey, she says, has been one of "mind, body, and spirit." And, of course, furniture.

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"It wasn't an easy decision," the 50-year-old former charter school administrator explains. "But Canada just seems like a kinder and gentler society that cares for its people. I feel more at home here than I did in California."

McMaster moved to Nelson in September, on the front edge of a mini-wave of Americans relocating north of the border that began after 9/11 and appears to be gathering momentum since President Bush's reelection. While the number is still small, and Canadians moving to the US still far outpace migration in the other direction, immigration lawyers say business has never been brisker.

Vancouver lawyer Rudi Kischer was so bombarded with phone calls and e-mails from Americans that he hosted three immigration seminars in the US, which ended Monday. Hundreds of Americans flocked to hear him speak in Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

"We've never done anything like his before, but we've had so many calls for consultation, it just made sense," Mr. Kischer said from a Seattle conference center Sunday where it was standing-room only for his 1 1/2-hour presentation. It included legal tips on immigration, plus advice from a financial planner and a real estate agent. "We're hearing from a wide variety of people. Some aren't happy with the Bush administration. Others are worried that their children may be drafted. Some are worried about a return to a McCarthy-type era."



**KINSHIP:** Some Yanks hope to become Canucks like these.

CHRISTINE MUSCHI/REUTERS

**Poll**

Have you considered moving to Canada for political reasons?  
Yes. I'm unhappy with Bush's policies and concerned about the threat of terror attacks and a draft.

48.2%

No. I'm worried about direction the US is going, but it's better to promote change from within.

33.7%

No. I'm content with living in the US under the current administration.

18.1%

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The Bush administration says it has no plans to reinstate the draft.

Canadian immigration lawyers have seen a steady increase in immigration from the US over the past several years - from 4,437 in 1998 to more than 5,353 so far this year. Much of this they attribute to unease in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks. The upswing has included many Canadians working in the States who hope to return home with their American spouses. Toronto lawyer Henry Chang says that many of them are concerned about security, and more recently, the weakening US dollar. "There's been a shift back from what's been happening for decades," says Mr. Chang. "Ambitious young Canadians have often gone to the US where the bucks are much bigger. But these days they're asking, 'Is it really worth it?'"

Ralph Appoldt hopes to bring his wife to Canada. The 51-year-old left Winnipeg, Manitoba, for southern California when he was 6. His parents wanted to eke out a better life, as well as escape the Winnipeg winters - notorious for their severity even within a country known for its inclement weather.

Mr. Appoldt says he loves Portland, the city he has called home for the past 15 years. Still, he has reapplied for his Canadian citizenship and hopes to pack up and move to British Columbia in the coming months.

"It's one of the hardest things I've had to do, but I feel I don't really have a choice," Appoldt says. "I just don't understand where 51 percent of this country [who voted for Mr. Bush] is coming from. I feel

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ostracized - like I don't fit in anymore."

It's possible many others will be following in his footsteps. One day after last month's US presidential election, the Canadian government's immigration website logged 180,000 hits from the US - more than three times its daily average. Even the premier of Manitoba has gotten in the act, traveling to Stanford University in October, appealing to students to emigrate to his province following graduation.

Canada, and especially British Columbia, has long been a destination for disaffected Americans. As many as 125,000 young people fled north to avoid fighting in Vietnam in the 1960s and 70s. Even now, a half-dozen US soldiers are seeking refuge in Canada to avoid the war in Iraq. One of them, Jeremy Hinzman, began his asylum hearing Monday in Toronto. But it's unlikely Mr. Hinzman will find success. From January of 2001 through September of 2003, 550 Americans made refugee claims in Canada, a dramatic increase from the 40 to 80 annual average prior to 2001. Still, the acceptance rate has remained the same: zero.

To be sure, it's too early to say whether the current flight will blossom into a full-fledged trend. There are currently anywhere from 600,000 to a million Americans living in Canada, a country that undoubtedly leans to the left of the United States, with recent moves to legalize gay marriage and decriminalize marijuana.

Stephen Saideman, a US immigrant in Canada who teaches courses in American foreign policy at McGill University in Montreal, says this is merely a blip on the chart.

"I think it's a lot of talk and not a lot of action. In terms of the real numbers, in the end it will be trivial. Most people won't be going anywhere just because of the election," Mr. Saideman predicts. "People think that Canada is just like the US with different weather. It's much harder to immigrate than one would think."

For years, the cross-border flow of immigrants has been much stronger from Canada into the US. Between 1989 and 2002, the number of Canadians emigrating to the US increased from 12,151 to

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19,519. The figure tumbled by 40 percent, however, between 2002 and 2003 - a drop that coincided with tougher screening in the post-9/11 era.

For her part, McMaster hopes to turn her attention to forming a new creative group in Nelson. She and her husband plan to build a performing-arts school that will one day be the envy of the world.

"One on level, I feel like my family is the kind of family that should stay and fight for a better America," McMaster says. "But I'm just so excited about my future here. The generosity of spirit is overwhelming."

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