



Citizenship and  
Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et  
Immigration Canada



**M**ETROPOLIS  
**Conversation Series** 9  
Regionalization of Immigration

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**Canada** 



## THE METROPOLIS CONVERSATION SERIES

Since its beginnings in 1996, the Metropolis Project has created a formidable network of policy professionals and scientific researchers drawn from governments, universities, inter-governmental organizations, think tanks, and non-governmental agencies here in Canada and in over twenty other countries. This network has greatly enlarged the body of knowledge and expertise available to policy and program development experts, has increased sensitivity amongst academics to the needs of government and inter-governmental bodies, and has led to more productive relations with NGOs.

With the maturation of the Project, we are now able to deploy a more powerful policy-research “tool” in our efforts to improve the management of the profound changes wrought by migration and growing diversity. We intend to increase the power of our debates and our discussions through a series of small and highly focused conference workshops. Our experience leads us to believe that the **Metropolis Conversation Series** will prove to be of significant value, especially to those grappling with policy challenges of immediate concern.

Eschewing traditional means of transferring knowledge from researcher to decision-maker, Metropolis, in this new series of events, creates settings in which senior policy makers and leading researchers can, in complete confidence, engage one another, explore situations or problems, challenge assumptions and probe each others’ expertise, all to advance the policy process and to create the basis for solutions in practice.

The gatherings are small, in the order of fifteen to twenty people, with the participants carefully chosen with the client to effectively meet the task at hand, be it managing the pressures of immigration on social services; managing the public’s acceptance of immigrants and persons of diverse ethnic origins; determining the impact of immigration on social cohesion, on education, on national or local job markets, on housing and neighbourhood development, on trade, on local development, on crime, and so on. Each Conversation is a closed and highly focused meeting promoting candid face-to-face exchanges among individuals who share common interests.

Through the Conversation Series, we are able to bring together a body of expertise that can address strategic interests and discuss issues of importance from a variety of vantage points. Academics from the four Metropolis Centres of Excellence in Canada and from research institutes around the world specializing in migration and ethnic studies can be brought to the discussions, as can policy makers from all levels in Canada and abroad. The Metropolis Conversation Series is a powerful and easy way to take advantage of the network that the Metropolis Project has created. Not only will participants will be able to work intensively with members of this network drawn from fifteen of Canada’s leading universities, from organizations such as UNESCO, the European Commission, the Asia-Pacific Migration Research Network, and the International Organization for Migration, but they will be able to develop lasting relations with these organizations for the future.

### **How to contact us**

To plan a session in the Metropolis Conversation Series, to identify or articulate substantive issues, to develop a roster of participants, to commission background papers, to develop the format of the session, and to discuss follow-up, please contact:

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METROPOLIS  
Conversation Series 9

## The Regionalization of Immigration

CONVERSATION REPORT

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### 1) INTRODUCTION

On February 21, 2003 Metropolis hosted a conference sponsored by Citizenship and Immigration to explore policy issues and debates surrounding the regionalization of immigration. The daylong conversation took place in Ottawa, bringing together senior federal, provincial and municipal public servants, academics, researchers, and community leaders. The conversation sought to:

- exchange ideas and expertise across jurisdictions, departments and disciplines regarding the regionalization of immigration;
- examine the successes and failures of previous attempts at regionalization of immigration;
- begin to define policy-relevant solutions to dispersion challenges; and,
- ensure that Metropolis' research centres continue to produce policy-oriented on the regionalization of immigration.

In order to achieve these objectives, the conversation followed the *Chatham House Rule*. This required that participants not be attributed or identified, allowing free speech and confidentiality to govern the conversation. This facilitated an engaging debate and the presentation of concrete solutions. The first part of this document describes the context for this conversation and the reasons that this is becoming an increasingly important issue for Canadian policymakers. The second part of this document is a thematic summary of the discussion that took place. It includes a variety of perspectives, some of which contradict each other, because the participants held diverse opinions. These statements do not necessarily reflect the opinion of Citizenship and Immigration or the Metropolis Project Team. Finally, this document includes a short description of Metropolis.

## 2) CONVERSATION TOPIC : Regionalization of immigration

a) *Context*

Canada accepts an average of 200,000 immigrants a year. The economic, social and cultural benefits of immigration to a receiving community have been widely documented. These include: contributing to cultural diversity, establishing businesses which create jobs, increasing the demand for local goods, and filling niches at the high and low end of the labour market.

In Canada, the need to take advantage of the benefits of immigration will intensify. The size and quality of the labour force continues to be an important prerequisite for economic development but Canada's population growth is decelerating. According to 2001 Census data, Canada has experienced a 4% population growth rate, one of the smallest ever in a census period.<sup>1</sup> This was due in part to a one-third decline in the rate of natural increase because of Canada's ageing population and decreasing birth rates. Decreases in population growth exacerbate existing national labour shortages in areas such as health, engineering and technology. In many cases, these shortages are already acute in rural areas and smaller urban centres. If current demographic trends continue, by 2011 newcomers to Canada will account for all of the country's labour force growth and by 2026 for all of Canada's population growth. Already, immigration accounts for more than one-half of all population growth in Canada.

Currently, however, the benefits of immigration are not being equally distributed across the country. In 2000, 74.48% of newcomers settled in one of Canada's three largest cities: Toronto (108,034 or 47.56%), Vancouver (33,084 or 14.56%) or Montreal (28,085 or 12.36%). The flow of immigrants to these cities has been at a sustained high level for fifteen years. This has contributed to the rapid growth of these communities at rates higher than provincial and national averages. Despite the benefits of immigration to these cities, rapid population growth can also strain local infrastructure and can tax the capacity of these cities to accommodate immigrants.

While Canada's three largest cities experienced growth, the population of many smaller metropolises and municipalities declined. For example, the population for the Greater Sudbury area in Ontario decreased by 6.0%, in Mackenzie in northern British Columbia by 13.2%, and in Chicoutimi-Jonquiere in Quebec by 3.4%. This depopulation not only reflects the demographic factors and immigration patterns already identified, but also the trend toward urbanization. In 2001, 79.4% of Canadians lived in an urban area with a population of 10,000 people or more, compared with 78.5% in 1996.

Settling immigrants in smaller cities, municipalities and rural areas would help to reverse the trend of urbanization, depopulation and labour shortages in smaller areas. It would also alleviate some of the pressure on Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver to accommodate newcomers. Provinces and municipalities are expressing a growing interest in sharing the benefits of immigration. However, there are still many questions that need to be answered before effective policy can be developed:

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<sup>1</sup> The only other two periods in which population grew this slowly were during the Depression of the 1930s and between 1981 and 1986 when immigration rates were very low.

- What are the major factors underlying immigrants' destination choices?
- Which immigrants can be targeted? Which immigrants are best suited for regionalization?
- Which regions and cities can be targeted? What are optimum sizes, labour market conditions, and quality of services for host communities?
- What are the implications of regionalization strategies? What will new programs/policies require in terms of services, locally and in CIC offices abroad?
- What are reasonable expectations? What are feasible targets of retention and what are successful strategies for regionalization?
- What policies and programs can be implemented (e.g. bridging programs for foreign students, "municipal" nominee programs)? Which programs are "pilotable"?

This report begins to address some of these key questions.

### *b) Government Commitment*

Although the regionalization of immigration has always been a concern at Citizenship and Immigration, Minister Denis Coderre recently raised the profile of regionalization and made it one of his priorities for the October 2002 meeting of Ministers responsible for immigration in Winnipeg. The meeting saw the Ministers agreeing to work on "regional strategies for immigration" to share the benefits of immigration across Canada. CIC, working with provincial and local counterparts will require a solid understanding of the issues to develop and implement effective regionalization strategies. This conversation report is intended to contribute to this understanding.

### 3) ACCOUNT of CONVERSATION

#### a) Assessing Previous Strategies

As a starting point for the discussion on the regionalization of immigration, participants assessed the goals, strategies, successes and failures of previous initiatives. Their assessment highlighted both the diversity of the approaches undertaken and the challenges facing policymakers. Some participants suggested that retention in a smaller region was the measure of successful policies, while others suggested that retention in Canada should be the broader goal. The following are some of participants' contributions to the discussion.

##### *i. Atlantic Region*

- The Atlantic region (7.6% of Canadian population) attracts 1.5% of immigration. In Newfoundland and Labrador, immigration used to be unacceptable because local people were leaving to find work. At the same time, the province was constantly bringing in others to staff hospitals and colleges, etc. Although St. John's has a thriving multicultural community, outside that city there is not much immigration. The 2001 census noted a 7% drop in population, the greatest loss in any province or territory. People are now realizing that they need to talk about immigration, the issues of out-migration, ageing population, declining birthrates, 'youth' departure (including would-be parents), and how the cycle of depopulation perpetuates itself. In next few years, the natural population increase in that province will be negative (death outweighs birth). However, the economy and secondary migration of immigrants and refugees are doing better.

##### *ii. Prairies*

- Integrated Metadata Database (IMDB) data shows that Alberta is losing immigrants as its first destination but attracting secondary migrants. Immigrants very quickly emulate the behaviour of Canadians in many ways – urban/rural and interprovincial migration is an element of that.
- Non-involvement of communities can lead to difficulties. Calgary has been proactive towards immigration, having developed a diversity strategy that focuses on improving its relationship with immigrants and the recruitment of immigrants into the labour force. There was coordination between all groups: the municipality, employers, and service agencies discussed how best to help immigrants integrate. Agencies were working in a complementary fashion and rationalising services with some success. This may have caused a modest increase in the appeal of Calgary to immigrants when compared to Edmonton.
- In Alberta, the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) is employer-driven. The onus is on employers to prepare both the community and potential immigrants to be employed in that area. This provides a greater security base for an incoming immigrant. A number of occupations tackled by PNP are unskilled, therefore meeting regional economic development needs becomes more complex. We need to

recognize the differences between immigrants and the responsibilities of various players.

- A case study community in Brooks, Alberta looked at housing policies and kept « getting lectures » on immigration policy. Due to the thriving employment generation in the hog market industry, Brooks was attractive to immigration. Seven hundred Sudanese came to work there – jobs existed but housing did not. Without complementary policy initiatives, they could not survive. This example drives home the point that unless policy integration exists, initiatives may not always work.
- In 1997, Winkler, Manitoba (a primarily Mennonite community of 8000-9000 people) approached the provincial government asking it to facilitate the immigration of 50 families from Germany. These families were interested in immigrating but did not have the necessary job offers so HRDC initially refused the requests. However when 50 employment offers were eventually validated, they were accepted. These immigrants have created a nucleus that has seen tremendous growth in numbers and industry etc. Despite some growing pains, this is proof that success is possible.
- Strategies in Alberta now include looking at available foreign student policy tools because those people are already in smaller communities where they have come to live, work and establish roots. Foreign students tend to stay once given permanent residence status.

### *iii. Quebec*

- The review of the regionalization issue in Quebec focuses mainly on integration and language issues (that is, if it is easier to learn French in Chicoutimi than in Montreal, why not study the immigration regionalization issue?).
- The first regionalization initiative in Quebec, in the absence of a formal policy, was launched 25 years ago with the arrival of refugees from Indochina. Initially, these immigrants were resettled across the province and, ten years later, almost all of them had returned to Montreal or gone elsewhere. The initial reception, although warm, was not sufficient to ensure long-term settlement.
- The current policy is now based on three main points: a) more effective identification, contact and selection abroad of candidates with profiles that would be of interest to the regions; b) to accelerate the socio-professional integration of immigrants and facilitate their adaptation to their new lives in the regions; and c) intensive, targeted promotion of the regions among immigrants already established in the Greater Montreal Area.
- The Quebec government has established a financial assistance program to contribute to projects that attract immigrants to the regions. It is implemented through socioeconomic partnerships.
- 88% of the immigrant population in Quebec is concentrated in Montreal, a situation that does not exist anywhere else in Canada. Due to the low or even declining population growth rates in smaller centres, certain regions in Quebec are beginning to realize the importance of immigration to demographic growth.
- As part of a survey aimed at evaluating the results of efforts to facilitate employment integration among immigrants in the worker class selected by Quebec using the

selection grid adopted in 1996, the respondents (2000 out of a target population of 15,000 immigrants) were asked questions about their main reason for settlement choice. According to the preliminary results of this survey, the presence of family, friends or people of the same origin is cited as the main reason (35% of cases) more often than employment opportunities (25%) or type of environment (13%). However, among those who changed their area of residence between their arrival and the time of the survey (235 people out of 2000), the reason given most often is employment.

- Visions regarding regionalization must incorporate a long-term view. The 2001 census data are clear: Although the numbers involved are modest, the gap between the growth of the immigrant population and the growth of the total population from 1996 to 2001 is greater outside the Montreal area than in Montreal. In Quebec City and Sherbrooke, for example, the total population increased by 1.4% and 4% respectively, while the immigrant population grew by 13% and 10%. In Montreal, the total population increased by 2.8%, whereas the immigrant population grew by 6%. This shows that the immigrant population as a percentage of the total population is increasing more rapidly in these regions than in Montreal. However, it must be noted that the gap is still huge.
- There are only a few incentives to attract newcomers to smaller centres. But there are some. Information sessions are organized for immigrants already living in Montreal to promote re-settlement to smaller regions. These sessions are designed jointly by the ministry and its regional socioeconomic partners. Visits to Quebec City and other urban centres are also organized in order to generate interest among possible candidates for relocation. In some cases, contacts with potential employers are established. This, like all of Quebec's regionalization strategies all done on an incentive basis.

#### *iv. Indicators of Success*

- Québec is studiously trying to encourage people to come there, while Manitoba has used its provincial nominee program (PNP) to encourage entry. The question is not solely how many come to a particular location but how many stay because retention is as important as attraction.
- As we discuss regionalization, we must keep in mind that Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver do not demand that immigrants not be sent. While we need to build the appeal of secondary centres, people are still drawn to the largest three cities: not just immigrants, but also Canadians. We need to dig deeper as to what the elements are that make big centres appealing so that we might make secondary centres as attractive.
- Regionalization of immigration must be viewed first through popular settlement, then population policy. We cannot ask immigrants to do what Canadians will not. We must acknowledge that immigration won't save the last primary school in a rural village.
- Deeming a placement 'unsuccessful' if an immigrant relocates after one year is problematic. Government-assisted refugees and immigrants leaving an initial destination is not a sign of failure – good settlement services lead to increased comfort to stay in the country.

## Regionalization of Immigration

- When we pilot something, we look for a positive outcome, but is it obviously retention? Is there anything wrong with having people cycle through communities? Bringing low skill level workers to do jobs that Canadians cannot do might mean they stop in varying locations to fill those needs, then move on. If HRDC encourages mobility, we could look at perhaps providing permanent residency for immigrants after a certain period of time, following which they move elsewhere.

## b) Understanding the determining factors in Immigrant settlement choice

After discussing previous initiatives, the participants identified the determining factors for immigrant settlement choice. Participants highlighted the characteristics of the receiving community and the characteristics of the immigrant and/or source country. The characteristics of the receiving community identified included: a critical mass of already established immigrants from a similar background; a welcoming community; services provided by the community especially immigrant services; and, educational, cultural and economic opportunities. The characteristics of the immigrant discussed included immigration class, the status of second-tier cities in their country of origin, and their ethnic background. Participants emphasised that there is a misperception among immigrants that opportunities and services do not exist in smaller areas; and a misconception among Canadians that immigration hurts their economic opportunities.

### i. Characteristics of the Community

#### *Critical mass*

- The term critical mass is an important concept in terms of regionalization policy – it refers to ‘comfort zone’. A consultation workshop in Thompson, Manitoba a few years ago revealed that the issue for immigrants was not a lack of jobs or services, but the absence of a comfort zone: there were too few people from same country. Immigrants did not feel discriminated against, but felt isolated from their own community. One respondent answered that 50 families in a town would be comfortable. Some families stay in a regional location to save enough money to then relocate to cities like Toronto. It may be easier to plan for the short-term for immigrants, but the immigrant experience is one of individual families.
- The critical mass issue is important: it tends to often be a family connection which shows a relationship of chain migration. Using family class programs is important for the retention of people.
- The critical mass question is true for some immigrants but not for others. French and Russian immigrants don’t care about critical mass as much as Asians, for example. The issue can become damaging within the immigration question.

#### *Linguistic Enclaves*

- Don Devortz in *Canadian Regional Immigration Initiatives in 21<sup>st</sup> Century* talks about the importance of linguistic enclaves. For example, he describes a study on Asians in Canada who explain that there is an economic trade-off between living in an enclave and living outside of it. On the one hand, living in a large Asian enclave in Toronto or Vancouver provides the ability to not have to learn English or French. An individual might get a job that pays less, but partial compensation comes from the fact that shopping within that enclave is cheap. On the other hand, living outside that enclave means this same individual could earn more money, but would need to learn English or French and the cost of living would be higher. To sum up then, many will choose to earn less because of wanting the comfort of the enclave, the presence of

less linguistic stress, and a lower cost of living. The author does not discuss the possible impact of the new selection grid and increased linguistic emphasis.

### *Familial ties*

- We must recognize the importance of family links between immigrants and their family abroad.
- Immigrants are moving from places in Ontario to join family who are thriving somewhere else. People are making these secondary migration choices well informed and well educated in English or French.

### *Educational, Cultural and Economic Opportunities*

- Research shows that skilled immigrants are looking to enter into their occupations, not just any job. A destination is attractive when it can make the transition into an immigrant's occupation of choice as seamless as possible. When talking about skilled immigrants, we are talking about people interested in ongoing learning and access to higher education for themselves and their children.
- There exists a paradox concerning jobs and settlement: people are saying in the region 'if those people want to live here, we'll find them a job' but on the other hand, immigrants say 'if I have a job, I'll go there'. This is a frustrating paradox for those trying to achieve results in regionalization.

## *ii. Characteristics of Immigrants and Source Countries*

### *Country of Origin*

- It has become a challenge to draw from populations living in a sister second tier city in another country that may be attracted to another second tier city here. Due to program review and other constraints, the bulk of immigration and visa offices have closed in second tier cities around the world. We are seeing a decline in immigration from those coming from countries in which 'second tier' cities are appreciated.
- The composition of originating countries is changing. Trends tend to follow what goes on globally. Our strategies should not undermine the natural growth of larger centres, as is occurring world-wide. Immigration has not always been so concentration in the Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver areas. In fact, about twenty years ago, 20% of immigration went to the prairies including 15% to Alberta – a huge proportion compared to Alberta's 6% now. In the Atlantic region, we have also seen a decrease. Nova Scotia has declined from 1% to just over .5% of Canada's total.
- The country of origin which works best for Québec is France, which makes up 12% of immigration to Québec. Considering the original linguistic objectives of Québec immigration planning, it's natural to work with France.

### *Immigration Class*

- When dealing with skilled workers, it seems their number one concern is employment. Middle to upper class people and professionals are primarily concerned with going where they can work and provide for their families. Opportunities for

professional development are important to highly skilled professionals who are more likely than lower-skilled people to move to smaller communities.

- When talking about long-term sustainable citizenship, we need to look less at so-called highly skilled immigrants but rather lesser skilled immigrants and refugees who are not just out looking for the best deal. By focusing only on the skills of the first people we bring in, we're missing a major objective : to cultivate sustainability, educational success, and long-term investment of second and third generations immigrants.
- Bridging programs are important – the question of Canadian work experience needs to be examined. Immigrants with foreign work experience need to be recognized.
- It is safe to assume that visa students are far more dispersed than immigrants in Canada. This is an area to look at in terms of dispersion of immigration.
- Some international students are coming with a goal of gaining permanent residence and citizenship. Some questionnaire results show a high level of interest in applying for permanent residence status, though many international students have been nowhere else in Canada so they have no frame of reference.
- Surprising, highly educated students have difficulty finding work because agencies tend to specialise in refugees or family issues rather than individual skilled workers.
- We need to focus on finding employment for spouses of students too. Many employers do not tell workers about the spousal employment program.
- Another big issue is that many schools do not report to CIC that some international students are working illegally. If the public knew, there would be more tension regarding this group as potential immigrants.
- Some international students use permanent residence and citizenship as a back door to the USA. By the time they're done graduate work, they are close to having US citizenship.

### *iii. Immigrant Misconceptions and about Small Centres*

- We need to address attitudes and myths about immigration. Negative myths about areas featuring small centres need to be combated at all levels, not only in Ottawa but overseas too. There is a lack of appropriate information and some biased opinions about what's available in smaller areas. We need to showcase what small areas offer: good settlement and education services, low crime rates, zero waiting for language training, reasonable housing costs, great cultural groups, etc.
- For some immigrants heading to a smaller community is like being relegated or discriminated-against, while for others, bigger is not necessarily better. One perspective is that unless you are in a huge city, you won't find a good university, secondary school, cultural institution, or hospital.
- Rural Canada is not one homogeneous community. There are different types of rural areas. There are those close to a major urban centres and those that are not. Agricultural, mining, fishing, forestry communities may not be near an urban centre but may be close to a regional centre. We could look at clusters of communities which share appeal – how do we present the 'package' in which a whole range of services may be offered through the cluster. Another type of rural Canada refers to

remote and isolated communities – how can there be a role for immigrant populations in locations like that?

*iv. Canadian Misconceptions about Immigration*

- There's an underlying assumption in our discussion that immigration is a good thing for the country. Public opinion cannot be overlooked.
- The success of an immigration program depends on a very supportive Canadian society. If Canadians see immigrants as displacing them from jobs, it causes tension.
- We have a vast country with only 32 million people here to pay for it. To nudge public perceptions, we should be asking - wouldn't it be wonderful to have 50 million paying for it?
- In western Canadian cities, particularly in the prairies, discussions of immigration strategies have to be seen at least in part through an Aboriginal lens. There are significant tensions between high rates of unemployment in Aboriginal populations and the debate about immigration strategies. If the Aboriginal labour market concerns are not at the table, an important part of community dynamic is missed.
- Many small communities do not think of immigration as a potential source of population growth, because it is hard to think beyond their local area. There is an educational process that needs to be done in small communities so they can begin to examine their strengths and sell them to potential immigrant populations.

### c) Developing New Regionalization Strategies

The strategies proposed drew on the insights of previous initiatives as well as on the determining factors for immigrant settlement. Participants identified key actors and their roles in four broad areas: government (all three levels, but with particular emphasis on the local level); receiving communities; business; and educational institutions. Governments should provide the necessary leadership, create frameworks and provide funding to local initiatives. Receiving communities should be welcoming of immigrants, ensure that language training and employment services are provided; and, involve prepared community-based immigration workers to assist in immigrant integration. Educational institutions could be used to provide training and bridging programs, especially for potential immigrants on a student visa. Although some participants were hesitant about the potential for business to contribute to broader national goals, business was identified as having a key interest in this issue because of current and future labour shortages. Participants felt that because business shares in the benefits of regionalization, it should also share in the costs. Key to all of the strategies proposed was that, part of the challenge of regionalization is to overcome misconceptions about living in smaller areas. Although for clarity the following participant comments are grouped by actor, it was emphasised that in order for any policy to be successful it must take a localised and nuanced approach and engage a variety of actors.

#### i. Receiving communities

##### *Welcoming Atmosphere*

- Community support is important. For example, of 80 Kosovo refugees who came to Moose Jaw, half stayed and half returned— not one went to other Canadian locations.
- A welcoming component within the community needs to be better fostered. Education and awareness-building is critical in community preparedness.
- Whether an immigrant or refugee is in the family class or highly skilled and strictly selected, Canadian locals tend to want immigrants to be ready to immediately and successfully make the transition into the community.

##### *Prepared Community-Based Immigration Workers*

- Before hosting an immigrant, honesty needs to be a priority among community-based immigration workers: what there is to offer and what is to be gained. For example, when a partnership emerged between Moose Jaw and Denmark, thanks to the appeal of the flying training, immigration advocates were sent abroad to educate newcomers before they arrived about local realities. Advocates are honest about freedom of mobility while providing information about what the community can offer.
- We need to better prepare communities and educate politicians and policy-makers.

##### *Provide Services and Employment*

- Community networks have to deliver. They cannot seduce and abandon, but rather, build infrastructures on the ground to support and sustain newcomers. A multi-partner group around the table sets up a model for community members. It sets up

public attitudes, public models, and could help shape public opinion, examining a range of issues: employment, bridging programs, training programs, higher education opportunities, nature of population, diversity of population, critical mass, receptivity of local community, housing, opportunities for language training for children/adults, settlement services, quality of life opportunities (cultural, recreational). Cities have to be key players to help drive this type of initiative.

- Community links are important for settlement movement. That kind of regionalization would almost be self-fulfilling. An immigration system can't be changed overnight, but perhaps in phases. For example, there are educational institutions in smaller towns with a ready-market of people with links into the community. If jobs could be nailed down in those places, they'd have an initial establishment of a network. We might look at this as a pilot.
- Regionalization has to be examined within a larger context of regional economic development. Many years ago, the availability of natural resources was a main engine of economic growth but in these times, cities are the engines of economic growth so the importance of the availability of economic opportunities for new immigrants cannot be over-emphasised. To attract more immigrants, smaller communities must crank up levels of economic development.

### *ii. Educational Institutions*

- Post-secondary educational institutions can be used in many ways. International students go everywhere in Canada, not just Montreal Toronto and Vancouver, so how can we facilitate and expedite as much as possible those international students who want to remain in Canada? Those students become anchors for family reunification because they already have experience here. Many institutions have campuses overseas. Why not start the immigration process overseas with people identified as qualified and desired? Universities could provide bridge and language training, occupation-specific training, a Canadian context, perhaps grant a Canadian credit, and assist in securing co-op placements or first job experiences to aid with a transition.

### *iii. Role of business communities*

#### *The Potential of the Business Community as an Actor*

- While an organizational structure that allows the community to play bigger role is positive, we should be cautious about investing too much in the business community which is primarily concerned with manpower issues. The business community would sooner support head-hunting strategies because immigrants in their eyes are workers that are mobile and who can be laid off. Any pressure from the business community will likely be on speed and flexibility. Business community values are not fully compatible with the interests we are advancing through immigration as a national project. The best way to bring business communities into this arena is via the local organizational council proposed today.
- The business community is interested in disciplining the Canadian labour force. Immigration is to serve other interests of the business community, not to serve labour.

- We should be careful not to brush the business community with one same stroke, the way we are doing today with immigrant communities and the regions. Many members of the business community are supportive, enlightened, and open with share values. Some business people take social responsibility seriously and as part of achieving their economic objectives.
- Within the Toronto City Summit Alliance, a high power group which examines the future of the city, major business leaders are represented. The business leadership is the most visionary in terms of the future of the city and the role immigration will play in that future. A new program called *Career Edge* is to provide work experience and internships for immigrants. They acknowledge that smaller businesses are unlikely to take the risk, so larger businesses are saying they will take the risk and be responsible and accountable.
- In terms of employment issues, something we need to keep in mind is that types of business can be different in regional Canada. Among many small businesses, there is a lack of HR planning – those are the types of businesses we should be working more with to find employment for immigrants and refugees. Within those businesses, job advertising is often informal. In Saskatoon, they are trying to put together a local labour market website, the goal of which is to primarily recruit ex-patriots back to Saskatchewan. This is an initiative that could help immigrants and refugees as well.
- When industries get together to guarantee a job for an immigrant, often they prop each other up to follow through on goals and commitments.
- We cannot underestimate the important role played by the business community in recruitment and integration. We also cannot underestimate the challenge – employers have to be pushed to do training, etc. HRDC and others are trying to work with employers to get them to recruit and train youth-at-risk, people with disabilities, and Aboriginal people, for example. Yet when immigrants come to employers, credentials are often unrecognised. Now there is real opportunity to get employers on board because of skills shortages and demographic declines.

*Share both costs and benefits*

- Employers should be encouraged to cover travel, workplace training, some housing expenses, etc. For that commitment, the employer gains an employee who will work at competitive wages in a good, safe environment. During that time, they would be asked if they'd like to stay in that community.

*iv. Role of Government(s)*

*Interest and Commitment of the Federal Government*

- Because objectives differ from province to province, we are really talking about national objectives. We are actually trying to agree on what we need to accomplish, not how – this should be recognized in any regional strategy. Alberta does not support national standards in this area, but feels the federal government's role is to eliminate barriers. Alberta also sees the federal role as looking at selection criteria and compiling incentives for regional migration.

- There is the important question of politics, represented in the sometimes inconsistent leadership of the CIC Minister. The role of federal government should be to get barriers out of the way.
- National leadership is essential on this type of initiative. We need to capture the imagination of Canadian society to spur innovative thinking. Perhaps it is not a process of discussion that can be entirely bottom-up. There may be a leadership role for government here. It would be useful to have multilateral framework within which to grow. This would not be enough, though, because the first step is for meaningful ministerial and federal discussions to occur. Inter-regional competition is a good thing here: so long as there is a minimum, the sky is the limit for better incentives and better barrier-removal. Inter-regional competition is a much better incentive for a region or province than a coast-to-coast policy.
- So is the issue of regionalization in some way a national project? Will it occupy the attention of all Canadians and all of Canada for a long time? Or will it fall off the table following the next cabinet shuffle? There needs to be a strong federal government commitment.
- In Israel, the process of immigrant diffusion is seen as project of nation-building. That may be a theme to be borrowed here. The problem with using nation-building however, is that people prefer to talk about head-hunting which is not always compatible with nation-building.
- Municipal officials should be better briefed on what is going on within the immigration process.
- The case of regionalization is a case for going against the grain, so we must keep in mind the limitations of public policy. Talking about the determinants of immigrant settlement patterns are outside broad public policy. A range of determinants are beyond our capacity to influence via public policy. We cannot get into areas where governments do not or should not have effective leverage. Strategies for effectively going against the grain have to be local, smart, and made directly within and by communities – niche strategies which try to open up space between the larger dynamics of population flow. Dispersion of immigration is a bottom-up phenomenon that cannot be a government-driven idea, perhaps just government supported.

### *Federal Government Funding*

- What makes our work easier is when the federal government steps forward and says yes, this is a priority we'd like to advance and support. A resource investment has to be made, beyond lip service.
- Increased regionally-directed funding is necessary. Presently, funding is based on data from three previous years. The catch-22 exists: money is needed to get the numbers, while numbers are needed to get the money. Further, the recent budget included nothing for incremental settlement programming. Smaller communities already suffer from reduced resources as opposed to larger centres that enjoy preferred funding.

*New Visa Requirements and Procedures*

- Expedited processing needs to be a priority. For the last six months, Quebec has tried to explore the pain of having federal visa obstacles versus provincial paperwork, sometimes resulting in almost one year of waiting for immigrants. People who've received provincial credentials but are awaiting a federal visa are being informed of regional jobs and invited to make direct contact with employers. Quebec is monitoring this initiative in terms of which pending immigrants are following up. The initiative is only one year old.

*Provincial Role*

- But if the federal government wants to move ahead on regionalization, do provincial counterparts? A good example is *L'Accors Gagnon-Tremblay-McDougall* (also called the Canada-Quebec Accord) between the federal government and Quebec, wherein Quebec oversees its own selection of independent immigrants.
- Small steps are still gains. The PNP started with very basic steps and has now become entrenched within a number of provincial agreements.

*Local Government Role*

- While there may be job offers in smaller communities, provinces are still stuck with a national policy which requires proof of a labour shortage across Canada with that specialization. When special accords were being developed, the federal government accepted that you could have job clearance made locally or at least at the provincial level – it was not required to prove there was a shortage of a specific type of engineer across Canada. Perhaps this logic should be extended in terms of smaller communities and regionalization.

*v. Addressing Misconceptions: Promoting Smaller Centres*

For clarity and emphasis, the comments about how to address immigrant misconceptions about smaller centres and to promote the positive aspects of living in less populated areas have been grouped together in the following section. Participants identified a variety of marketing strategies which involved governments, businesses and visa officers.

- Groups of communities, collectively, may be able to appeal to immigrants to attract them to their region. When we promote Canada abroad, in general, we promote wide-open spaces, mountains, scenery, and rural areas; however, we don't follow the image through to promote the quality of life that these rural communities have to offer.
- Businesses, depending on their size, should help to promote the community where they hire people.
- In the past, visa officers would tour Canada before being posted overseas so they could be exposed to what life was like in many locations. Today they don't do this, and often come to the job with a very narrow framework. A new system based on a

paper screening process now exists; so we're back to the dilemma of how to get the word out and how to market smaller centres.

- We need to look in a rigorous imperial fashion into how we market Canada abroad. The external face of Canada portrayed via immigration policies and actions of visa officers may be promoting Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver so we should not be surprised when these cities become primary destinations for immigrants.
- How do we capture the diversity and complexity of regional Canada? Cities have to do more in this regard and should be involved in marketing their own images. Calgary is an example of a city working against negative images held outside the region. However, if the city's efforts are not incorporated into how Canada is presented abroad through larger services they will be ineffective.
- The CIC Facts and Figures book has 40 pages on Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver but only one page on other centres. The federal government is required to be aware of language and gender analysis, so why not regional analysis too?
- Perhaps promotional documents could be prepared by the service agencies instead of government departments. This could be the difference between material that's written for potential immigrants or materials intended to flatter the community.
- Niche marketing (giving immigrants reasons to look at specific regions) can take advantage of the fact that land is a premium commodity in many other countries. For example, we've got plenty of space here for hog farms, the establishment of which apparently runs into snags in Europe. This would help to support the immigration of farmers, but whether that will result in the kind of numbers we're envisioning is unlikely.
- It is devastating that Minister John Manley did not approve funding for an immigration portal. There could have been a guided tour of Canada available to immigrants in pictures, words, numbers, data, labour market information, settlement activities, religious and cultural activities, composition and demography.
- Quebec City is now targeting Eastern Europe and is one of only a few centres that are going directly to foreign locations to find immigrants (in conjunction with the Provincial Ministry). Officials there do not see any other way to expose Quebec City to potential immigrants outside Canada.
- Promotional activity is the first to go when time and resources get tight. It's the most tiring and demanding part of the overall work. Many intending immigrants take exploratory trips which is more difficult to do in countries where visitor visa requirements exist. We have to take Canada to them.

#### d) Creating, Expanding and Consolidating Networks

Participants emphasized that for any policy to be successful, it would need to bring together all of the key players and actors, and be local in its approach. It would need to ensure that the local community is prepared and willing to host newcomers. This might be achieved through a bottom-up approach where responsibility for regionalization is at the local level. The following are comments that emphasize the inclusion of a variety of actors and how they can be brought together in a sustained effort to achieve regionalization.

- Developing a system of integration in which all players are at the table is key. Alberta is now looking at developing how to actually integrate skilled immigrants into the labour market, which involves not only what is done domestically but also overseas in terms of promotion. We need to bring in an assessment requirement for credentials beyond what systems are already in place. Regulatory and professional bodies need to be approached.
- We should be encouraging more local community-based councils or boards that bring all players together: educational institutions, regulators, school boards, employers, agencies – to ask ‘what are our needs?’ Such councils would explore what the community is prepared to offer to potential immigrants. This information could be mounted on an internet portal.
- There needs to be meaningful dialogue between immigrant and refugee communities, NGOs and employers. We may need to be holding some employers more accountable for how they cherry-pick immigrants. We need to work with employers who may have had bad experiences in the past, to show them the positive outcomes in investing in immigrant employees.
- Some employers do not use immigration service agencies because working there knows how the process works and the potential benefits to them. Some employers are even hostile towards refugees. Working with employers takes much time and persistence. There should be more funding for regional NGOs to really get at the employer issue.
- Solutions for regionalization needs to be local, flexible and reflect the economies of scale. For example, the town of Truro, Nova Scotia explored what they could do to make the town more attractive. While Truro already has a strong church support for refugees, a community college, and other amenities the economies of scale issue posed challenges for them.
- No regionalization initiative will work if the federal government tells immigrants to go to a specific community without that community being prepared and willing to welcome newcomers. Therefore, bottom-up systems are needed to ensure receptivity and barrier-removal. The terminology of dispersion reflects a top down approach, and is offensive because it connotes people as commodities.
- We should have the courage to create policy that will change the playing field to ‘favour’ in some way our regional centres. Regionalization is not just a question of immigrants – it is very much a local responsibility too. Therefore it is not useful to think of the debate as a central agency versus local responsibility. It is both.

## Regionalization of Immigration

- If any regionalization policy is to succeed, we need to also discuss the regionalization of responsibility and the regionalization of resources.
- Regionalization discussions tend to leap-frog the involvement of provincial governments and tend to drop down to local communities. We should be thoughtful about the role of provincial and territorial governments. Furthermore, when talking about the federal government, we need to talk about both CIC and HRDC. We should consider at a five-prong network, comprised of CIC/HRDC, two provincial/territorial ministries, and the municipalities – to negotiate roles, responsibilities and vision. The network could also include other stakeholders to give a local perspective for a settlement network.
- We hear all the time about national standards and tension between levels of government, so we need to look at how to successfully balance the need for local expertise, motivation and leadership and the need to set national standards.
- Labour market policy has to be integrated with other policies such as health, housing etc.
- It may be useful for CIC offices to make more presentations to local communities, certainly those where there are immigrants or refugees with family overseas wishing to settle here. In many centres, there are no immigration consultants around. If we increase community awareness of immigration options, it may increase the number of people going to smaller centres.

### e) Future Research and its Requirements

Participants agreed that there was some very interesting research available on regionalization strategies at a macro level. However, they suggested that at local levels, where in some cases the impetus for regionalization should occur, there is a lack of adequate data to support a comprehensive regionalization strategy. To fill this gap, participants suggested the following:

- Researchers need access to deeper data. There have been tremendous efforts in the past 10-15 years to build big data banks, especially IMDB. One reason is that they have data that you cannot find anywhere else. Statistics Canada has varying accessibility requirements while other levels of government don't make it easy for researchers to access that vital information. CIC is currently doing a major longitudinal survey on immigration in Canada which will give a wealth of information about the immigration experience including details on housing, employment, reliance on social assistance, etc.
- Municipalities need to get their act together. If we talk to them, they will say they have huge data problems, including getting data from CIC for their Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) requirements. Data must be made more available to municipalities in order for them to do the work that is now being required.
- Federally-funded research in smaller communities on the demographic challenges facing the community in the short and long-term needs to be conducted. This would help to identify if and how immigration can help a community. It would also help us to identify which immigrant would be best suited for the area.
- Any localised research should not forget the benefits to the immigrant and his or her family. The pros and cons of living in the community should be highlighted so that the community can be accurately promoted.

#### 4) ABOUT METROPOLIS

The Metropolis Project was conceived in 1994 and launched in 1996. It was motivated by the recognition that there existed a pressing need to come to grips with the challenges and to capitalize on the opportunities associated with migration and the integration of ethnic and religious minorities in large cities around the world.

The Project was shaped by the understanding that for migration and integration policies to succeed, they would need the active and co-ordinated support of all levels of government, NGOs, the private sector and the public at large. These stakeholders did not lack conviction about the importance of the task. What they lacked was knowledge and, consequently, the ability to operate from a shared strategic platform. In order to address this, the Project was structured in a manner to include all of the key stakeholders.

A second key factor affecting the Project's design was a sharp curtailment in public spending which forced governments everywhere to re-evaluate their priorities and to seek strategic alliances that would rationalise scarce resources and leverage help from other sectors. In the case of policy development, it was recognized that further investments in knowledge were needed and that this knowledge should be obtained through new alliances with universities, research institutes and think tanks. It was felt that by bringing external scientific knowledge to bear on complex, strategic issues that cut across several jurisdictions, more robust public policy would result.

The goal of the Metropolis Project is to improve policies for managing migration and diversity in major cities, and it will do this by:

- enhancing academic research capacity;
- focusing academic research on critical policy issues and policy options; and
- developing ways to facilitate the use of research in decision-making.

The project has been structured as a partnership with both domestic and international components. It seeks to increase the amount of research done in the immigration and diversity fields; to create opportunities for significant interchange among decision-makers, researchers and NGOs; to encourage discussions that go well beyond the mere stating of positions, descriptions, and advocacy; and to provide settings for problem solving using the best information and analysis.

<http://www.metropolis.net>

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