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**Government Restructuring and Immigrant/Refugee Settlement Work:  
Bringing Advocacy Back In**

Gillian Creese

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***Government Restructuring and Immigrant/Refugee Settlement  
Work: Bringing Advocacy Back In***

***Gillian Creese  
Department of Anthropology & Sociology  
The University of British Columbia  
6303 N.W. Marine Drive  
Vancouver, B.C.  
Canada  
V6T 1Z1***

***e-mail: creese@unixg.ubc.ca***

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## **Abstract**

This paper explores the consequences of Federal government restructuring of programs and funding for immigrants and refugees experienced by the main settlement service organizations in the city of Vancouver. Restructuring has a number of contradictory implications for settlement workers: funding cutbacks yet overall fiscal growth; a more diversified funding base yet less ability to plan from year to year; more 'mainstream' clients served yet new barriers for immigrants and refugees; less time funded to provide settlement services yet more complex client needs; and increased accountability to funders yet less responsiveness to the needs of immigrant and refugee communities. At the same time, it is generally argued that greater dependence on government funds and 'partnerships' conflicts directly with the ability of non-governmental agencies to engage in effective social advocacy. As this study suggests, however, it is also possible for restructuring to open new spaces for social advocacy; and for non-profits to simultaneously expand their 'partnerships' with government while successfully challenging government policies. Through a broad-based anti-poverty coalition organized by settlement workers, settlement work and 'mainstream' politics are being redefined by bringing immigrants and refugees into the centre of political demands and debates over restructuring the welfare state.

## **Government Restructuring and Immigrant/Refugee Settlement Work: Bringing Advocacy Back In<sup>1</sup>**

### **Introduction**

With the advent of neo-liberal governance in the 1980s and 90s, and its twin pillars of deficit reduction and the contraction of the welfare state in favour of privatization and contracting-out, the importance of the non-profit sector in the development of civil society and the provision of social services has received increasing attention. In Canada, as in the United States, non-profit or non-governmental organizations<sup>2</sup> have long been interwoven into the publicly-funded provision of social services. The combination of public funds and private administration of services for public ends raises questions about the nature of the non-profit sector, its dependence on or independence of government,<sup>3</sup> the meaning of distinctions between the public and private sectors,<sup>4</sup> and the boundaries of the state.<sup>5</sup>

Successive cuts in federal government spending in Canada during the 1990s have both threatened the viability of, and stressed the importance of, the non-governmental sector.<sup>6</sup> Many non-profit organizations are struggling to survive as preoccupation with deficit reduction reduces potential sources of funding. In particular, community organizations primarily concerned with advocacy are increasingly disavowed by the federal government as 'special interest' groups with tenuous claims on the public purse.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, some non-profits find themselves in growing demand as 'partners' contracted to provide social services as part of a renewed 'celebration' of voluntarism and the community.<sup>8</sup> For those non-governmental agencies in demand as 'partners' with the public

sector, mediating the divergent demands of funders and communities produces tensions between the demands of 'professional' service provision and the need for social advocacy.<sup>9</sup> While not new, this contradiction is deepened by neo-liberal restructuring that has reduced the social safety net and valorized community 'partnerships' at the same time that new market-based regimes of accountability have been imposed and funding has become more limited, narrowly targeted, and unpredictable. Thus the current funding regime heightens the challenges faced by non-profits and the marginalized groups of citizens typically serviced through non-governmental contracts,<sup>10</sup> even as it promises fiscal growth for some direct service providers. Non-governmental agencies face three main dilemmas as they become more tightly interwoven into 'partnerships' with government:

[F]irst, the potential loss of autonomy or independence that some fear can result from heavy reliance on government support; second, 'vendorism', or the distortion of agency missions in pursuit of available government funding; and third, the danger of bureaucratization or over-professionalization resulting from government program and accounting requirements.<sup>11</sup>

Ironically trends toward non-profit dependence, vendorism, and bureaucratization may threaten the characteristics that make non-profits attractive 'partners' for government in the first place – their grass-roots community connections – by subverting responsiveness to community needs and ability to act as community advocates.<sup>12</sup>

This paper explores some of the contradictions facing one non-profit sector engaged in providing settlement services for new immigrants and refugees in the city of Vancouver during the most recent period of government restructuring. Over the last three decades a patchwork of non-profit organizations has emerged to provide settlement services, contracted by the federal government in the context of an on-going program of

immigration and refugee settlement at a rate of about one percent of the population per year. Since the mid 1990s government restructuring and downsizing has shaken the foundations of settlement work, created greater uncertainties around funding, new gaps in services for immigrants and refugees, pressures toward vendorism and bureaucratization, and increased stress for workers in the field. While cuts to health care, education and social assistance have produced wide-ranging public debates, the impact of restructuring in the immigrant/refugee settlement field has gone virtually unnoticed outside of the non-profits working in that sector. This lack of discussion is somewhat surprising in the city of Vancouver where 35% of the population are immigrants.<sup>13</sup>

As restructuring proceeds and public discourse remains mute new forms of political advocacy have begun to emerge amongst settlement workers in an attempt to bring immigrant/refugee settlement issues into the 'mainstream' of public debates around poverty and the welfare state. In contrast to what we might expect, restructuring appears to be heightening rather than lessening the politicization of settlement work even as it ties non-profits more closely to the shifting program directions and accountability demands set by various levels of government. The process of restructuring may open new spaces to renegotiate the marginal position of settlement services in accessing public funds by helping to redefine immigrants and refugees as part of the 'mainstream' body politic. Thus settlement workers in Vancouver appear not only to be mediating the conflicts between demands for service provision and social advocacy, they appear to be challenging the very nature of this division.

## **Non-Profit Settlement Service Agencies in Vancouver**

This study is based on research with the three largest non-profit agencies that provide settlement services to immigrants and refugees in the Vancouver area<sup>14</sup>: the Immigrant Services Society (ISS), the Multilingual Orientation Service Association for Immigrant Communities (MOSAIC), and the United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society (SUCCESS).<sup>15</sup> The origins of these three agencies are similar. Each emerged in the early 1970s from grass-roots community organizing to provide a range of language training and interpretation services, employment services, and help in cultural adaptation. These small, initially volunteer-based, and largely women-led, non-profits emerged at a time when immigrant/refugee integration services were non-existent and sources of post-war immigration were becoming more diverse.<sup>16</sup> Ad hoc community organizing emerged in response to a growing need for information and services to smooth the integration of new non-English speaking immigrants and refugees. Over time, successful organizing and lobbying for government funding produced a whole system of federally-funded settlement services. By the mid 1990s ISS, MOSAIC and SUCCESS had each grown to encompass more than 100 staff running dozens of different programs with annual budgets of around five million dollars each. To varying degrees, these successful non-profits were willingly incorporated into the network of contract service provision for the federal government and political advocacy had long taken a back seat to program delivery. More recently, reduced levels of funding, increased competition between non-profits, and restructuring programs and services have raised new issues for settlement workers and the immigrants and refugees they serve. The very survival of smaller agencies

is uncertain. Larger organizations, like those discussed in this study, are more likely to weather the storm, indeed even to expand their operations.

ISS, MOSAIC and SUCCESS have each carved out some degree of specialization and the impact of government restructuring varies somewhat across these agencies. SUCCESS is the most distinctive of the non-profits, emerging as an ethno-specific organization to provide services for the Chinese immigrant community. As the Chinese-origin population in Vancouver has grown in the last two decades the public profile of SUCCESS has increased and it is widely recognized to be an important voice within the local Chinese-Canadian community. Shifts in immigration trends in the late 1980s increased the number of affluent migrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan through the programs for entrepreneurs and investors. This has aided SUCCESS' ability to engage in large-scale fund raising. With its strong ties within the local Chinese-Canadian community, SUCCESS not only offers services and programs for newcomers, it also offers a number of programs for the broader Chinese-speaking community (in both Mandarin and Cantonese), including public and citizenship education made available through fund raising and service fees.

Of the three non-profits in this study SUCCESS is the least dependent on government funding: with a budget of over \$5 million in 1996-97, more than 40% was generated through fund raising. At the same time, however, its core services (including settlement services<sup>17</sup>, employment programs, and LINC<sup>18</sup> English language classes) are funded by the federal government. The federal government continues to pressure SUCCESS to move beyond its ethno-specific constituency. As a result of such

diversification SUCCESS now runs multilingual settlement services in a number of non-Chinese languages in suburbs around Vancouver, as well as the reception services for all new immigrants at the Vancouver International Airport.

ISS and MOSAIC are broader settlement organizations not identified with a particular ethno-cultural community. Thus fund raising is much more difficult and the bulk of funding is tied to government grants and contracts. Both ISS and MOSAIC provide settlement services in a wide range of languages (with some overlap and some ethno-community specialization), run English-as-Second-Language schools (through LINC), and run a number of employment programs. ISS also runs Welcome House, an integrated residential and service program for government sponsored refugees, and a training institute that includes fee-for-service adult education courses in areas not funded by government programs. MOSAIC initially emerged to provide multilingual interpretation and translation, and runs a fee-for-service translation and interpretation department that presently accounts for nearly thirty percent of its annual budget. The majority of these fee-for-service translation contracts are with various parts of the public sector such as government ministries, hospitals, schools and the like. It can be argued that this is another form of government contracting, though of a sort that is not directly subject to government policy shifts. Funds generated through translation and interpretation allow MOSAIC some flexibility to develop other programs for which government funding is unavailable or inadequate, such as community development projects and administrative costs.

Although there are some differences among ISS, MOSAIC and SUCCESS the impact of government restructuring has been very similar across the three agencies. In an effort to ensure confidentiality of sources and remain sensitive to the agencies' concerns about drawing comparisons within the sector, the following discussion draws as much as possible on direct quotations of settlement workers identified only by interview number, and provides examples of program and funding changes without details that would identify particular agencies.<sup>19</sup>

### **Restructuring and Settlement Renewal**

So their actual goal is to save money. What I'm getting right now, I could be wrong too, what I'm getting is if we save dollars for them we'll get the funding; if we don't, good luck. The numbers, they don't care how many clients we see right, but they care about money. (Interview 9)

I'm not sort of saying that they don't have the client in their mind when they're making these decisions, but I think that there's a real conflict when you're trying to save the buck and then to be able to still provide service to clients. (Interview 20)

As part of divesting itself of deficits and restructuring the welfare state the federal government in Canada has for a number of years been downloading programs and fiscal responsibility to the provincial level. In 1995 the federal government announced its intention to devolve funds and responsibility for immigrant/refugee settlement to the provincial governments through a process called 'settlement renewal'. While maintaining an 'enduring presence' in the field, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) is, at the time of writing, in the process of negotiating devolution of responsibility for its three core settlement programs -- ISAP<sup>20</sup> settlement programs, LINC<sup>21</sup> language programs, and

AAP<sup>22</sup> programs for refugees -- to the provinces.<sup>23</sup> On May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1998 a long awaited agreement was signed to transfer \$45.8 million per year for the next five years to the British Columbia treasury along with responsibility for delivering CIC-ISAP settlement programs in the province.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, through other changes to federal programs under Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), including new Employment Insurance (EI) legislation, the cancellation of the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) aimed at those 'severely disadvantaged' in the labour market, and plans to devolve all employment training to the provinces<sup>25</sup>, federal funding for employment programs for immigrants and refugees has also been dramatically transformed. As part of this restructuring/devolution process the province of British Columbia has recently begun to fund some settlement programs<sup>26</sup> and employment programs<sup>27</sup> for new immigrants.

Devolution of federal responsibility to the provinces means replacing one level of government with another. However, at the same time that devolution is being negotiated, funding levels, program directions, and eligibility criteria have been transformed. There is, quite simply, less money available for many programs, including those providing core services related to long-standing community needs such as bilingual counsellors and employment programs.

The needs of the immigrants I don't think are decreasing but the programs are changing. I think the programs are likely to decrease [further] and I think that there is a drying up of support for the integration process in society and I think that that's the big issue we are all facing. It comes out in dollars. (Interview 2)

Funding that is available is more piecemeal in nature, funding fractions of positions or programs; funding directions change quickly with increasingly narrowly targeted eligibility

requirements; and new accountability demands intensify and download management responsibilities to non-profit staff.

In the last three years there has been a major shift to bring in multiple funders funding one project. So for example three years ago many of our community settlement counsellors were funded by one source of funding. But now, just over the course of three years, some of those individuals now have up to six funders funding them. (Interview 3)

It's becoming more and more rigid and more and more structured, more and more difficult to operate. I'm not sure it's good accountability but it's accountability - numbers, results and measurement has become really important without having a clear idea about what's the best way to do that and very few discussions about what's effective about it and what it really does. (Interview 2)

It adds anxiety to the front-line workers because nobody knows whether they will be funded next year. We don't have even one project that is more long-term in terms of sustainability because every government funding source requires your project to be renewed each year. (Interview 24)

The uncertainty of when funding is going to come, and it's an extremely uncertain climate, primarily because both the feds and the province are struggling with it themselves. Therefore it creates high levels of stress in staff because they never know when their contracts are going to be renewed. So that directly affects the staff, as opposed to the clients. We can also not serve our clients in terms of saying that we know for sure often that there will be another [program], if they've missed the beginning of a program for example, we can't confirm that there will be another program coming up, because funding is so erratic. (Interview 17)

Paradoxically, however, funding has also opened in new 'mainstream'<sup>28</sup> areas, increasing the overall size of annual budgets, while directing non-profits in new directions not necessarily related to needs expressed by immigrant and refugee communities (Salamon's concept of vendorism).

Recent changes in employment programs for immigrants provide an important example of the consequences of these trends. In 1995 the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF), aimed at the 'severely disadvantaged' in the labour market, was suddenly cancelled

by HRDC. Virtually overnight settlement agencies each lost over one million dollars in employment programs, between one-fifth and one-quarter of their annual budgets. Staff delivering employment programs, many with years of specialized expertise, were laid off. The threat of fiscal insolvency related to termination compensation (in lieu of adequate notice for long-term employees which CRF had not provided) forced non-profits to resort to a new strategy of short-term fixed contracts for all employees regardless of how long they had been employed with the agency. The net result in one agency was a long-term drop in HRDC funding from \$2.5 million to \$1.7 million over two years. More important, CRF had allowed non-profits to develop a number of specific skills training programs for immigrants, and these programs disappeared. Although stop-gap funding was later obtained from HRDC it was in quite different employment-related programs providing general employment assistance (such as job clubs) rather than skills training.

Obtaining employment, and thus an income on which to live, is arguably the single most important issue for new immigrants and refugees and programs in this area are critical.<sup>29</sup> In the scramble to replace the employment programs cancelled under CRF, settlement agencies contracted with HRDC to provide employment programs to Employment Insurance (EI) recipients, and contracted with the provincial Ministry of Education, Skills and Training (MOEST) to provide programs for Income Assistance (IA) or welfare recipients. This was so even though very few immigrants or refugees could qualify for either of these programs. To qualify for Employment Insurance an unemployed person must have between 420 and 700 insured hours of work in the previous year (depending on the regional unemployment rate); while a newcomer to the labour market

must have 910 insured hours in the previous year.<sup>30</sup> Thus few recent immigrants can collect Employment Insurance to become eligible for these programs.<sup>31</sup> Programs aimed at Income Assistance recipients fare no better, since immigrants and refugees find it difficult to qualify for provincial welfare payments under 'B.C. Benefits'.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, 'B.C. Benefits' employment programs explicitly focus on IA recipients under 25 years of age and those who have been on IA for at least seven months. Again, these criteria exclude most immigrants and all refugee claimants. Nevertheless, in response to extreme fiscal instability, settlement agencies mandated to provide services for immigrants and refugees began running employment programs aimed at the general population of EI and IA recipients. This shift quickly inflated agency coffers, often beyond the original budget cuts. As one settlement worker commented, however, "if I'm looking at it from the [agency] point of view actually things look good; but I know that out there it's not" (Interview 5).

The consequences for immigrants and refugees were not hard to predict:

With funder restrictions and criteria, we're not able to service all the people that are coming to our organization seeking services. That is because more and more clients are not on [government] income, employment insurance or on income assistance. So you know, in a very broad philosophical kind of statement, poverty issues are coming up more and more and are affecting how [the agency] is able to respond appropriately. (Interview 3)

So there's a very large group of people and at times it can be upwards of 70% of the people who come through our doors in any given year, for whom we really can't refer them to a skills training program whether it be at [our agency] or throughout the lower mainland. What they are eligible for are very short-term interventions. There's a discrepancy between the needs of our potential clients and the resources that we can either directly or indirectly offer. (Interview 15)

The current employment programs, for example, do not meet the needs of people who are not on EI or Welfare, so [the programs don't meet the needs of] our client base. The big chunk of our clients which are newcomers who haven't worked in Canada or are not in receipt of welfare for a certain number of months, are not

accessing those services or can't access them. Refugee claimants who are refugees who are claiming their status by landing in Canada cannot access these services. (Interview 19)

For the most part the only employment programs still available to most immigrants are more generic "job clubs" and employment "assistance" rather than skills training programs with a good track record in meaningful job placement. In the area of employment programs, then, restructuring/devolution has widened the gap between community needs and services provided, and threatened to compromise the mandate and philosophy of the settlement agencies in order to pursue fiscal health in an increasingly uncertain funding regime.<sup>33</sup>

Employment programs were not the only core areas subject to restructuring. LINC English-language classes have been cut at every agency. One non-profit has been reduced from 206 class hours per week to 161 hours, and lost more than \$100,000 between 1994/95 and 1996/97. Another was reduced by \$300,000 over 3 years. In the case of AAP for refugees, CIC announced unexpectedly in the fall of 1997 that it would no longer fund Welcome House for government sponsored refugees.<sup>34</sup> This service was now deemed effective but too expensive.

Non-profits also lost funding for bilingual settlement counsellors funded through the ISAP program. In one case, for example, although the number of counsellors actually increased from 8 to 10 over two years, there was a shift from full to partial funding. In 1994/95 7 of 8 counsellors were fully funded through ISAP; in 1996/97 only 3 of 10 were fully funded by ISAP while 7 were partially funded.<sup>35</sup> In some cases the agency was forced to reduce positions to part-time, in other cases it obtained additional funding from other

sources such as the provincial Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration (MRMI), the City of Vancouver or fee-for-service initiatives in non-core areas. SUCCESS alone did not suffer an over-all reduction in ISAP funding, probably due to the significant number of new Chinese immigrants arriving each year. However it too witnessed the trend toward more piecemeal funding.

One rationale for decreased funding is tightening eligibility criteria for ISAP and LINC services. ISAP is available to cover settlement needs only within an immigrant's first three years of landing, and LINC language programs effectively have a three year time-limit as well, ending when citizenship status is attained. At the local regional level ISAP has set more stringent guidelines prioritising settlement services within the first year of landing. When combined with closer monitoring and accountability structures, restrictive eligibility criteria widen gaps in services for immigrants and refugees while increasing unfunded (and often unpaid) workloads for settlement staff.

I notice that the bilingual counsellors are experiencing some pressure because they are only supposed to provide services to landed immigrants who've been in the country up to three years. But the bulk of the calls, the majority maybe, are coming from other people who've been in the country for a longer time and they just cannot as an agency close the doors and say no. (Interview 21)

The need for services are constant. They haven't changed. But I think there is an assumption on the funders' side where they say, well once an immigrant, a newcomer, a refugee, has stayed in Canada for three years, they expect that person to have acquired enough information, enough life skills, to be settled and integrated into the socio-cultural landscape of Canada. Except that that's not how reality works... it's a really far-fetched assumption to say that a newcomer within three years would acquire all that knowledge about the Canadian system and he needs no settlement services. (Interview 19)

I have to serve the same or more clients in the same time which I have, and that would affect the effectiveness of the service we provide. Well to tell you the truth, that makes me sacrifice my time for them... I come early in the morning and I go

later in the evening in order to cover that area because I see the need for the people. However, I know that the budget is cut, but it's hard for them to understand because they need help. So when they are here, they are newcomers and I have been in the same shoes and I know how they feel. So it's hard for me to tell them there is no such service... so because of that I have to sacrifice my time. (Interview 12)

These time limits for service eligibility are particularly problematic for women:

Say for example they are women. They have to look after their kids when they are still very young...so they cannot really go out and take classes...And when their kids get older and then it's about the time they also become Canadian citizen, so that means they are not eligible to take LINC classes (Interview 25).

Daycare available at some language centres helps to ameliorate access barriers for women seeking language training, but spaces are few and waiting lists are long.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, daycare services are not funded for employment programs, and remain a critical barrier for many women.

Restricted eligibility for service coincides with reduced services in other levels of government. The result is that clients are bringing new service needs to settlement agencies that staff are not paid to perform.

There are more and more people coming to us for services in areas we're not supposed to be providing service - help to fill out forms from immigration, asking about classifications of immigration and that kind of thing. Whereas it was normally done at the office - the CIC office - it's being handed over to the community or at least pushed out the door. (Interview 2)

Well to tell you the truth, some of the services it provides for the clients, if you go by the rules and regulations which government is giving as guidelines, we are not supposed to do it. So it means that we will, we are being limited to providing those services... I must tell them no...or we have to charge them for those services you know, when we know that people don't have a job. This newcomer here, whether immigrants or refugees, how can we charge them when they just hardly survive here? (Interview 12)

In addition to the ongoing priorities of English language acquisition and employment programs, issues of poverty, hunger and homelessness have increased considerably among the immigrants and refugees seeking support from non-governmental agencies. As one settlement worker commented: “I don’t think there’s one community that we serve here that isn’t impacted by the reduction of the social safety net” (Interview 22). A service provider in another agency reflected: “You see a lot of suffering, a lot of human suffering that doesn’t have to be there” (Interview 8). One settlement worker collected food from the food bank for distribution in class; another ran clothing drives to provide running shoes and other clothing for work practicums; many recounted the mounting number of clients suffering emotional stress and depression (with limited or no resources directed in this area), and family conflict and spousal abuse (again, with few resources for referral).

So much that’s happened within Canadian society, the cuts in the Liberals’ move to balance the budget, not only the devolution of federal government responsibilities but also the, you know, the massive cuts to transfer payments has really raised poverty issues within the immigrant and refugee communities... So what’s happening is that we’re kind of caught between a rock and a hard place because in particular settlement services and community settlement services there’s this push for further accountability, there’s this push for more and more quantitative, you know evaluation analysis, you know, how many clients you serve. But on the other hand the clients that are coming to us for service require longer interventions, they’re more complex cases. They don’t, the problems that they’re bringing to the front line staff are not just nice and neat settlement pieces, they touch on a myriad of poverty issues. (Interview 3).

The clients who come to our agency are going through a more difficult time than before. Therefore, their expectation from us is bigger. We are the only resource or the only safe harbour they have for help. So, in other words, the standard of living of our clients has decreased. Yes and more than the financial situation, is a situation of despair. They are unable to find employment and remain unemployed, overwhelmed by family issues. But the financial hardship compounds their other problems. (Interview 21)

These issues are not, as might be assumed, restricted to refugees and to immigrants sponsored by family members who may be adversely affected by the current economic climate and thus unable to offer their kin the expected assistance. The various classes of economic immigrants – skilled professionals and investors and entrepreneurs alike – are affected by the same trends. Those with educational credentials and experience attained abroad (outside of Britain and the United States) typically find their credentials unrecognized and their experience ignored in favour of ‘Canadian experience’ they cannot attain without a job.

The professionals who really do face systemic barriers in terms of their credentials and their experience and their training accredited probably are suffering, one because there’s no [advanced] language [training] available for them that’s government sponsored, and two, even from organizations, the professional organizations themselves, there would seem to be, it’s still slow to get the professional organizations to co-operate, to make sure that there’s a bridging program to help that particular group of immigrants to enter the labour market. (Interview 15)

We’re saying ‘Oh yes, come, come! We need people in your field’, but then when they get here the professional associations won’t let them in. Then why are we inviting them? ...One of the things that I hear over and over and over: ‘I go for a job. They want Canadian experience’. If we’re a country of immigrants, how are we going to work with that issue? (Interview 13)

In addition, it is not uncommon for business immigrants to lose the money invested in Canada. As one settlement worker observed, there are few services to help business immigrants learn the rules of Canadian business and avoid fraudulent or highly risky ventures, and virtually no government monitoring of investment schemes set up to attract business immigrants. Those who suffer such financial hardships often find few alternatives but to return to their country of origin, leaving spouses and children in Canada.

No businessmen want to lose their money. When they do investment, if only 10% can win, why do they want to invest their money here? And that's why those husbands don't stay here. (Interview 26)

Employment barriers and investment difficulties produce frustration and anger for many of the clients settlement workers see. Anger that immigration misled them about opportunities in Canada, suggesting that their skills and expertise were in demand.

We're talking about the independent [immigrants]... I have seen some of them who are desperate, like they are hopeless you know, and they say back home we were working in three different jobs, we had a great life and things and then they decided to come to Canada... Most of them are complaining, why when we go to immigration, like the Canadian embassy or something to apply, why don't they let us know that there is no jobs available for us in Canada. (Interview 11)

They're also very angry, they're often angry when they come. They're angry with the government and they're angry with us. We can usually bring their anger down to a point and bring them to a point of accepting like, okay you're here now so let's get going we'll help you do whatever we can. But this is all we can do, you know, and it's very crushing for many people. (Interview 8)

As has happened in other social service areas, client anger and frustration sometimes spills over and settlement agencies are increasingly concerned about the safety of front-line staff. Some agencies have begun to develop new safety protocols including plexi-glass barriers and restricted entry to reception areas.

All three non-profits do in fact provide services well beyond the time frame funded by programs like ISAP since it is difficult to turn away those seeking help. As a consequence there is a continual struggle to find alternative ways to fund the shortfall, and increasing pressure to expand, with greater or lesser success in different agencies, in the areas of fee-for-service, partnerships with business, fund raising, and volunteerism. Smaller settlement organizations are most threatened by these trends since it is rare that

smaller agencies can draw on a large constituency for volunteers, fund raising or successful fee-for-service ventures, command a public profile that a potential business partner might be drawn to, or possess the resources needed to continuously explore potential new avenues of funding.

I just want to make the point that often times a lot of the so-called small pots of money do take a lot of time to put together. [For example] the City has one of the most challenging application processes I've ever come across. If I were to translate the amount of time, you know, in getting, fulfilling the requirements just to get say five thousand [from the City] it would probably be comparable to the amount of time I would be putting in to get something, you know a program that would probably cost about over a hundred thousand. (Interview 5)

While ISS, MOSAIC and SUCCESS each offer some fee-for-service programs, so far at least service fees have not been adopted in core settlement areas. However, recommendations recently made in a report by the Immigration Legislative Review included proposals that immigrants pay for services such as adult language training and ESL instruction in the school system.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, pressure to shift toward service fees is already beginning in employment programs in a 'voluntary' form:

When a class starts for employment assistance training or a training program, we have to say to everybody: 'Welcome to the program, it's being funded by the federal government, this is how much it costs the average tax-payer for you to participate in this program. The government and [the agency] would be very happy if you would be interested in contributing to the cost of your, of your participation in the program. And you know we can collect the money whenever, we're available to collect the money.' We then collect that money, we have to package it up and send it off to the federal government. It's a whole new role and it's the beginning of the fee-for-service. You know it introduces it in a voluntary way and later on I'm concerned that it's going to be introduced as a mandatory part of EI programs in the future. (Interview 2)

A few partnerships with private sector businesses and trade unions have also been undertaken, usually fee-for-service contracts to provide services such as multicultural

workplace training or ESL workplace training. Less often corporate sponsorship can be found for settlement programs, such as a family violence prevention program run by one agency.

The restructuring/devolution process has not only created more unstable, short-term, piecemeal funding, it simultaneously directs settlement workers and clients toward 'mainstreaming'. 'Mainstreaming' occurs in two ways: first, contracting settlement agencies to provide programs for the general population (as in employment programs); and second, restricting settlement services to the most recent immigrants and refugees with the assumption that after a very short period of time 'mainstream' agencies can adequately provide services. In response to community demands 'mainstream' agencies are indeed changing, and directly competing with settlement organizations for funding.

The other changes that we've witnessed is there are more agencies whom we used to call quote unquote 'mainstream' and who are now providing settlement services, in the sense of neighbourhood houses, community centres, are becoming part of the settlement delivery. (Interview 19)

More competition from other agencies, combined with more unstable funding generally, requires constant production of grant and program proposals such that at least one non-profit now has a full time manager to co-ordinate grant writing and new program development. Funding proposals take considerable agency resources.

We did ten full proposals for [the province] and those proposals are about eighty pages long so we did ten proposals in the first year, in 95, and ended up getting five, which was extraordinary because we did better than, you know, we ever anticipated. And five projects was a very, very good number, but that was an enormous amount of work. Last year we did the same thing... we did eight proposals to get four [provincial] contracts. (Interview 4)

Needless to say, funding to prepare program proposals is not covered by any government funder. This funding treadmill is intensified by program shifts within some departments. For example Heritage Canada, which is mandated to fund community outreach and multicultural programs, has moved away from continuous program funding to short-term projects with measurable end-products. Thus funding proposals for Heritage Canada must now be tied to new projects even as existing ones meeting established community needs are cancelled.

Market-based accountability and the push toward partnerships and collaboration has permeated settlement programs. On the one hand, collaboration has its advantages, in some cases resulting in innovative new programs working with local Neighbourhood Houses or even with other settlement organizations. On the other hand partnerships eat up more time in administration, especially for the growing number of programs funded by more than one source and for which double or triple accountability measures are typically in force.

The enhanced complexity of managing collaborative programs takes an enormous amount of administrative time. For example you have X kind of program which has five funders, three partners, and so every decision that has to be made is made you know, with your partners, there are issues around staff supervision and performance appraisal and all that angle. There's also the fact that you're working with different funders who have different fiscal year, different deadlines throughout the year. (Interview 3)

HRDC has been the most aggressive in downloading management/accountability functions to non-profit staff with a new case-management system (called Contact 4) that involves developing a detailed employment training plan and outcomes for each client, and down-loading it electronically to HRDC offices. At the same time, employment

counselling within HRDC offices has stopped. Both measures have increased the workload of settlement workers.

Recently we have seen that the HRDC has stopped employment counselling at all from their office... and they have shifted that to immigrant societies... Secondly, there has been a lot of changes like case management which is going to be by centralized computer where the person who is coming to [my agency] will not be duplicated by [another agency]... It's going to double my work. I have to, like I have to give the information to HRDC in their computers, then I have to do my other D [data] base computer where we have to provide the [internal agency] report every month because in the government computer, which is Contact 4, I cannot do the report [for the agency]. (Interview 9)

In addition, narrowly framed accountability measures are changing the way some settlement workers provide services to immigrants and refugees by affecting program recruitment. As two workers explained, this trend toward bureaucratization can be quite subtle:

Programs are looking at marketability, they're looking at results so in the process of recruitment and selection there could be subconsciously, you know I mean we're going to, you're going to go for the client who is marketable. Be able to get the job, be employable you know. (Interview 5)

Which means in my next in-take in September I am forced to take, like between a woman who needs more daycare and someone who has a school age or no kid, I'll take that [latter] woman. There's less chance that woman will drop out of the program... [So it's affecting] my recruitment and my ability to reach people who really need it. This person who has younger kids probably needs the program more because she's really isolated and, and motivated, but I know that she cannot afford to have an extra hundred dollars every month. (Interview 7)

It should be noted that devolution to the provincial level has spurred the British Columbia government to begin to fill some gaps in federal funding in advance of assuming responsibility for CIC programs. The department that will take over the CIC programs in British Columbia is the Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration

(MRMI). MRMI now provides some 'core funding' for non-profits, a small but important pot of money that can be used to offset increasing administrative costs. In addition, MRMI provides 'settlement grants' that can be used for bilingual counselling and other programs beyond the 1 to 3 year time limits imposed by ISAP.

By bringing in the province into the funding base of the community settlement counsellors' work we are now able to provide services to refugee claimants which we weren't allowed to do in the past because of the strict funding criteria of ISAP. So in that sense because of the flexibility of the provincial government funding source, some gaps have been filled, not only to refugee claimants but also the province currently does not have a time specification on how their money [is spent], you know the length of residence that a client needs to be in Canada. So this three year magic number that ISAP uses is not an issue for the province. (Interview 3)

It remains to be seen whether MRMI's more flexible eligibility criteria will be applied to ISAP funding once the province takes over responsibility next year. Similarly, the City of Vancouver is more flexible and community focused in its funding criteria favouring partnerships between settlement and 'mainstream' organizations to fill in gaps in federal and provincial programs. Though City funds for immigrant and refugee settlement are limited, funding grew relative to other municipal expenditures in the 1990s and, so far at least, has not been targeted in recent budget cuts.<sup>38</sup>

Other provincial departments, such as the newly created Ministry for Children and Families (MCF), have been engaged in a wholesale rethinking of service delivery that is also affecting non-profits. MCF provides funding for family programs, family counselling, crisis intervention and family violence. Within the Vancouver region, MCF has sought ways to significantly reduce over 100 contracts for specialized services to only a few dozen contracts. To this end MCF sought out one 'super-organization' that might then

sub-contract more specialized services for immigrants and refugees. Alarmed by the implications of this proposal<sup>39</sup> five non-profits (including ISS, MOSAIC, SUCCESS and two smaller agencies) have eschewed competition to become this `super-organization' and instead come together to organize a legally-constituted consortium to oversee MCF contracts for services to immigrants and refugees. This initiative marks a new level of collaboration and co-operation among the non-profits in this sector that may well serve as a model for the future. After months of hard work and several thousand dollars in legal costs to create the consortium, however, MCF announced in July 1998 the cancellation of its service restructuring initiatives.<sup>40</sup> The consortium is no longer required and will likely dissolve. Once again rapid changes in government policy and funding directions have increased instability and levels of frustration among settlement workers.

In general the large non-profit settlement agencies like ISS, MOSAIC and SUCCESS have adapted quickly to restructuring and appear, at least at a financial level, to be thriving. Thus some settlement workers have suggested that restructuring has turned out to be a good thing, forcing organizations to become more efficient and responsive to a changing environment. These views are expressed by both front-line staff and senior management:

I think that, as an agency, our staff are now in the head space of being able to change direction quickly, so you can meet the clients' needs better, by identifying change and what's changed and quickly responding to it. I think that...we've been around for almost 25 years so I think we're, we had institutionalized ourselves in lots of ways; we were kind of slow to react to things sometimes and I think that change hasn't been a bad thing...I think it's been a good thing (Interview 16)

We've had to be much more creative around other sources of funding and we've had to be creative about how to deliver our services, how we become more

efficient and how we continue to prove ourselves so that we can keep some sources of funding that's been there. (Interview 20)

It's forced us to be better predictors of what funding allocations might be and how we can best put together some training programs and services to help meet our clients' needs, so in a sense, it's forced us to be better at what we do. (Interview 15)

On the other hand the chronic uncertainty, job insecurity, work intensification, and a range of more complex issues facing clients, coupled with barriers to providing services, have produced real stress among settlement workers.

It's more tiring for the front-line staff because they're the advocates, they're the information-referral counsel and clerks, they are the family counsellors, they see the abuse, they are seeing neglect, they are seeing people that are hungry, homeless, that really impacts them. (Interview 22)

Well you know I love working in this field but I also find it very discouraging as a worker in the field who feels overwhelmed sometimes by the needs of the clients that we can't meet. I feel like we don't keep up. (Interview 8)

I can't think of an English word although I know there is one, and I don't want to say 'humiliating' because it's not humiliating... [it's] really unsettling and almost to the point where it disrespects the individual who does the work. I mean, I don't know what the word is, but it just feels really disrespectful to us as workers who do front-line work, and to think that our contracts are, you know, we don't know until two days before the year [end] whether we're going to have a job or not, or what kind of job. Is it going to be half-time? Full-time? Three days? Four days? You know? I think that's really unsettling. Dehumanizing, yes. That's probably closer to the word I was looking for. (Interview 20)

Settlement work continues to be performed largely by those with immigrant or refugee backgrounds and it remains a feminized occupational sector, thus it is not too surprising that it continues to be relatively low paid.<sup>41</sup> When high stress, low pay and limited job security are combined, high staff turnover can be expected. At the same time, more proactive responses to the effects of restructuring are also occurring that challenge some

of the broader trends outlined above. For many settlement workers social activism has become an important way to negotiate these uncertain times, and to reclaim the value of the work they do.

## **Bringing Advocacy Back In**

The process of restructuring over the last few years has contradictory implications for settlement service organizations: funding cutbacks yet overall fiscal growth (at least for the large agencies); a more diversified funding base yet less ability to plan from year to year; more 'mainstream' clients served yet new barriers for immigrants and refugees; less time funded to provide settlement services yet more complex client needs; increased accountability to funders yet less responsiveness to the needs of immigrant and refugee communities. On the one hand these trends point towards continued dependence on government funders, which in turn produces increased vendorism in competing for program funds, and more bureaucracy in service delivery. On the other hand the trends outlined above are challenged by many settlement workers in an effort to reassert the mandate and values of non-profits that have, from their beginnings, been grounded in struggles for equality and social justice for immigrants and refugees.

Advocacy is once again becoming more central to settlement work. Indeed it might be argued that non-profits in this sector are reconnecting to their roots. Advocacy in the 1990s is tied to redefining the 'mainstream' to include immigrants and refugees and thereby challenge the persistent marginalization of immigrants, refugees and those who work to provide settlement services. Heightened advocacy also challenges conventional assumptions that reliance on government funding, especially during precarious periods of fiscal restraint, necessarily results in political acquiescence. The role of settlement workers in advocacy demonstrates that it is possible, in a metaphorical sense, to bite the hand that feeds you and to simultaneously expand and challenge government policy.

On one level advocacy has always been an important part of settlement work. Settlement workers act as advocates for individual clients and immigrant and refugee communities, mediating the sometimes impenetrable layers of bureaucracy shrouding government departments such as immigration and social services, and other social institutions like schools, hospitals and the legal system. Almost all the settlement workers interviewed discussed these forms of advocacy as important parts of their work: finding the right channels to get clients into housing, onto social assistance, into employment programs, access to emergency funds for medical or dental care, eye-glasses, clothing for work, food, interpreters, assistance with family immigration sponsorships, refugee claims, children's schools, to name but a few of the examples provided. As one settlement worker argued:

It's essential that as workers we advocate for them because of whatever limited power that we may have, but that power is certainly more than our clients' power. (Interview 20)

Even at this level -- connecting immigrants and refugees with the right information and access to services -- advocacy is perceived to be an increasing component of settlement work as restructuring expands needs while services decline.

The most significant change, however, is the importance of what one settlement worker referred to as 'big advocacy'.

I believe in advocacy big-time and I think it's everybody's responsibility. It's part of our work... There's small advocacy and there's big advocacy right. I mean the small advocacy we're all doing in our own little ways ... but big-time advocacy [is] in terms of issues that will really affect our ability to deliver services. (Interview 7)

`Big' advocacy means publicly challenging government programs and policies that affect immigrants, refugees and settlement workers.<sup>42</sup>

There is some controversy about how appropriate it is for settlement workers to engage in more politically focused advocacy. Non-profits in this sector differ in how public and how activist they are in `big' advocacy. As a high-ranking manager in one non-profit argued:

Advocacy is important, I think that there's a real role for it but I don't think you can do it when you're on government funding ... I mean you can do it up to a point and then you realize that if you continue to do it you'll get into trouble [with the funders]. (Interview 2)

The tension between political advocacy and possible government/funder reaction is often mediated through participation in coalitions organized around specific issues. As one settlement worker suggested, working within a coalition is preferable to standing alone and allows agencies more cautious about `big' advocacy to continue to participate:

At the senior management level [we do] write letters proposing changes to policies but... we would never take that to the media and say you know, we do not believe in this policy. We would not design our campaign to change that policy and include a media briefing on an issue. [But] if we were involved with a group of agencies we would probably be willing to be quoted. (Interview 4)

One non-profit, MOSAIC, is more high profile than the others in its advocacy, and increasingly defines itself apart by taking a strong leadership position in this area.<sup>43</sup>

MOSAIC is more likely than the others to form and lead a coalition of settlement service agencies:

We sell ourselves as advocates here and we sell the organization as an advocacy-based organization... None of the other organizations do because they have some convoluted view that it's got to do with your charitable status when it really doesn't. I mean, you can do advocacy for the purposes of your client. You can't

do partisan politics but you can participate in non-partisan type activities, and we do that, on behalf of the clients. (Interview 22)

So far at least this more pro-active social advocacy position has not hurt MOSAIC's fiscal health, which like the other large non-profits continues to expand. Whether an organization is willing to offer leadership or simply join a coalition, however, coalitions are central to 'big' advocacy in this sector. Coalition advocacy provides both a stronger basis to press for change, and some protection against adverse reactions from funders.

One forum for such social advocacy occurs through the Affiliation of Multicultural Society and Service Agencies of B.C. (AMSSA). AMSSA is a coalition of 75 multicultural and settlement service agencies in British Columbia. Over the last two years AMSSA has shifted its focus, in a sense a return to its founding principles, to a strong advocacy role. Its new Mission Statement includes the goal of "develop[ing] AMSSA's position on the major social justice issues of multiculturalism, anti-racism, and immigration."<sup>44</sup> Among its recent activities, for example, AMSSA organized an all-day community forum to discuss concerns about the Immigration Legislative Review's proposed changes to the immigration and refugee legislation.<sup>45</sup> The forum served the multiple purposes of sharing information, raising political activism, and producing an impassioned video for submission to the Minister's consultations.

While AMSSA is a sectoral coalition that engages in advocacy other initiatives cast a much wider net. Much of the 'big' advocacy of settlement workers over the last two years has focused squarely on poverty, attempting to bridge the separation between 'mainstream' anti-poverty groups and immigrant/refugee activists. Anti-poverty work has

become central to politicizing settlement workers, as restructuring increases poverty issues among immigrants and refugees, and central to forging new connections outside the settlement service sector. The most important expression of this is the formation of the Working Group on Poverty. In 1996 MOSAIC helped organize a one-week tent camp to protest homelessness amongst refugee claimants, action that resulted in eliminating a three-month waiting period for eligibility for social assistance. This protest forged new connections with 'mainstream' anti-poverty groups, who agreed to put the situation of refugee claimants at the centre of a broader policy protest affecting all newcomers to British Columbia, including those migrating from other provinces. Building on this single-issue initiative the Executive Director of MOSAIC subsequently organized the Working Group on Poverty as a broadly-based coalition against poverty.

The Working Group on Poverty now includes over seventy member organizations, including all of the non-profits that deliver services to immigrants and refugees, 'mainstream' anti-poverty groups, various non-profit community groups, organizations of health providers, teachers, unions, and others as well as all three levels of government (municipal, provincial and federal). The mandate of the Working Group on Poverty is to focus specifically on immigrant and refugee poverty. It is a grass-roots coalition that acts as a bridge between the settlement and 'mainstream' community groups. At the time of writing its objectives were fivefold: affordable housing, food security, equal access to employment and language training, changing government policies that create barriers, and advocating for social justice for immigrants and refugees.<sup>46</sup>

Among its activities so far the Working Group on Poverty has organized a number of media events; organized the anti-poverty conference at the People's Summit during the APEC meetings in the fall of 1997; successfully lobbied the B.C. Human Rights Commission to recommend wide ranging human rights protection for the poor (in access to housing, employment, obtaining services, etc.); lobbied for a policy change to permit refugee claimants access to full Income Assistance rather than the more meagre 'hardship allowance' (and won a verbal commitment to change this policy); acquired \$40,000 from the province to research issues of poverty among immigrants and refugees in British Columbia; begun to organize a conference on affordable housing for the spring of 1999; and lobbied against restrictive eligibility criteria tied to EI and IA for skills training employment programs.<sup>47</sup>

There are two things that make the Working Group on Poverty particularly noteworthy. First, immigrants and refugees are placed at the centre of a broad anti-poverty coalition, redrawing poverty issues in a way that incorporates immigrants and refugees as part of the 'mainstream' citizenry, and redrawing settlement issues connected to broader trends in the welfare state. Second, all levels of government participate in the coalition, but in the context of leadership by settlement workers. This provides a direct route for addressing policy concerns and a potential source of coalition funding, but without undermining the activist orientation and grass-roots concerns of the Working Group on Poverty.

It might be argued that heightened levels of advocacy among settlement workers pale in comparison to many of the other consequences of neo-liberal restructuring

discussed above. However, the resurgence of social activism points to the complex and contradictory relationship between the state and non-profits, which often emerged out of social advocacy in the first place, and ongoing demands for public funding of services to groups historically marginalized in the body politic. In the settlement service sector in Vancouver, non-profits are finding ways to challenge government policies, redefine 'mainstream' politics by bringing immigrants and refugees into the centre of political demands and debates over the welfare state, and negotiate the changing demands of neo-liberal governance, with its perils of vendorism and bureaucratization, at the same time.

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## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Various terms are used to describe organizations that are neither part of the private (profit making) sector, nor directly funded and accountable to governments as part of the public sector (including the civil service and para-public sectors such as hospitals and universities). This 'third sector' is variously referred to as the voluntary sector (because its origins and often much continuing work is done on an unpaid volunteer basis); non-governmental organizations or NGO's (which often receive most of their funding from the state but are independent in terms of organization and policies); and the not-for-profit sector (to underline the fact that such organizations exist to provide services, information, advocacy etc. and not to make a profit; thus most have charitable tax status). In this paper the terms non-profit and non-governmental are used interchangeably to refer to settlement service agencies. Since settlement workers in these agencies are paid to work the term 'voluntary' sector is not used, though all three agencies also use volunteers in some capacities.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Dobkin Hall, "Abandoning the Rhetoric of Independence: Reflections on the NonProfit Sector in the Post-Liberal Era", in Shifting the Debate: Public/Private Sector Relations in the Modern Welfare State, edited by Susan Ostrander and Stuart Langton, New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1987:11-28; and Josephine Rekart, Public Funds, Private Provision: The role of the Voluntary Sector, Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993

<sup>4</sup> Susan Ostrander, "Introduction" in Shifting the Debate: Public/Private Sector Relations in the Modern Welfare State, edited by Susan Ostrander and Stuart Langton, New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1987:7-10.

<sup>5</sup> Steven Rathgeb Smith and Michael Lipsky, Nonprofits for Hire: The Welfare State in the Age of Contracting, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

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<sup>6</sup> Similar trends have occurred at the provincial level as well. However, it is cutbacks in federal funding that have affected the non-profit settlement service organizations discussed in this research. For a survey of the effects of provincial cutbacks and contracting-out on the non-profit sector in British Columbia during the 1980s see Josephine Rekart, Public Funds, Private Provision: The Role of the Voluntary Sector, Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993.

<sup>7</sup> Leslie Pal, "Civic Re-Alignment: NGOs and the Contemporary Welfare State", in The Welfare State in Canada: Past, Present and Future, edited by Raymond Blake, Penny Bryden and Frank Strain, Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1997:88-104.

<sup>8</sup> Pal, op. cit., p. 88-104.

<sup>9</sup> Lester Salamon, "Of Market Failure, Voluntary Failure, and Third-Party Government: Toward a Theory of Government-NonProfit Relations in the Modern Welfare State" in Shifting the Debate: Public/Private Sector Relations in the Modern Welfare State, edited by Susan Ostrander and Stuart Langton, New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1987:29-49; and Roxana Ng, "State Funding to a Community Employment Center: Implications for Working with Immigrant Women" in Community Organization and the Canadian State, edited by Roxana Ng, Gillian Walker and Jacob Muller, Toronto: Garamond Press, 1990:165-183.

<sup>10</sup> The provision of social services through non-profits is typically directed at those on the margins of civil society, including women, children, the poor, seniors, and persons with disabilities.

<sup>11</sup> Salamon, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Leduc Browne, Love in a Cold World? The Voluntary Sector in An Age of Cuts, Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 1996; and Josephine Rekart, Public Funds, Private Provision: The Role of the Voluntary Sector, Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993.

<sup>13</sup> The vast majority of newcomers settle in just three Canadian cities: Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. For example, in 1997 more than half (55%) of all new arrivals settled in Ontario, mostly around the greater Toronto area; 22% settled in British Columbia, mostly in the greater Vancouver area. See Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Agreement for Canada-British Columbia Co-operation on Immigration, Background, Immigration by Province, 1995-1997. May 19, 1998. For trends in Vancouver see also Miro Cernetig, "Fear of 'Hongcouver' Overcome" The Globe and Mail, November 5, 1997:A10; Rick Ouston, "English now a minority language in Vancouver", The Vancouver Sun, November 2, 1996:A1; and Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Agreement for Canada-British Columbia Co-operation on Immigration, Background, British Columbia by Top Ten Source Countries, 1995-1997.

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<sup>14</sup> This research focuses on issues facing large settlement service organizations in the major metropolitan area of British Columbia. Smaller organizations and those in other regions of the province often face different issues, including much more precarious financial stability and a more limited range of services.

<sup>15</sup> Research involved analysis of annual reports, program documentation, and interviews with 27 staff at ISS, MOSAIC and SUCCESS. Interviewees were drawn from a wide range of positions in settlement work including front line staff such as receptionists, bilingual counsellors, ESL teachers and community development workers, as well as program managers and Executive Directors. In addition, program documentation was collected and informal interviews conducted with federal funders from Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC); provincial funders from The Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration (MRMI) and the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training (MOEST); and the City of Vancouver Social Planning Department. This research also draws on the author's four years as a member of the Board of Directors of one of these non-profits, which began in 1994/95 during the most intense phase of program restructuring, and both research assistants' years of experience working in the field.

<sup>16</sup> Canada has a long history of diverse immigration evident in the development of the city of Vancouver. Chinese immigrants were amongst the first non-Aboriginal residents in what became the city of Vancouver. By the turn of the century Vancouver had significant communities from China, Japan and India alongside various groups of Europeans and First Nations. A series of restrictive laws closed most immigration from non-European sources by the early 1920s. Following the Second World War limited family reunification became possible but the liberalization of immigration legislation, with the adoption of a universal points system, occurred only in 1967. Formal refugee policies were instituted a decade later. In the late 1960s, therefore, migration patterns quickly began to shift away from European sources and Asia became the largest contributor of Canadian immigrants. See for example Kay Anderson, Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980, Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1991; Freda Hawkins Canada and Immigration: Public Policy and Public Concern, second edition, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988; and Anthony Richmond, Global Apartheid: Refugees, Racism, and the New World Order, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994.

<sup>17</sup> Settlement services include counselling and orientation in an immigrant's/refugee's native language, family programs, women's programs, programs for youth, and community development programs.

<sup>18</sup> LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers) is a federally funded program that provides language instruction for new immigrants (refugees do not qualify until they have been granted landed immigrant status). All three non-profits run LINC classes, as do a number of other providers in Vancouver.

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<sup>19</sup> In initial discussions with the settlement service agencies concerns were raised that this research might draw comparisons between agencies that might be perceived as unfavourable, or somehow reveal sensitive confidential information to outsiders. The need to ensure confidentiality for agencies has resulted in the use of general identifiers in the text such as “one agency” or “another non-profit”. In addition, all individual interviewees were guaranteed confidentiality and are cited only by interview number.

<sup>20</sup> The Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) is designed to meet the needs of new landed immigrants within the first year of settlement, with access to services possible for up to three years. ISAP funding is a core component of funding for the non-profits, providing orientation services, bilingual counsellors in numerous languages, and some limited employment assistance services. In addition to ISAP, LINC and AAP, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) also funds HOST programs to match volunteers with new immigrants.

<sup>21</sup> Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) is open to all landed immigrants assessed to require language training up to a level of basic comprehension. LINC does not include more advanced work-related language training.

<sup>22</sup> The Adjustment Assistance Program (AAP) provides temporary accommodation and settlement services for government assisted refugees. These are refugees chosen from abroad and resettled in Canada by the federal government. Refugee claimants (or those claiming convention refugee status under the terms of the U.N. Convention on Refugees) are ineligible for these services and become eligible for other services directed at immigrants only once landed status has been acquired.

<sup>23</sup> For an overview of the “settlement renewal” process and directions see Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Round II Consultations on Settlement Renewal: Finding a New Direction for Newcomer Integration (undated); and Valerie Gruno and Susan Stovel, Settlement Renewal in British Columbia Phase III: Constituent Assemblies and Final Recommendations to the Federal and Provincial Governments, March 1996.

<sup>24</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Agreement for Canada-British Columbia Cooperation on Immigration, May 19, 1998.

<sup>25</sup> Employment Insurance (EI) replaced Unemployment Insurance (UI) in January 1997 with the effect of reducing eligibility quite dramatically. EI is overseen by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), which in 1995 cancelled another program aimed at the “severely disadvantaged” in the labour market (the Consolidated Revenue Fund or CRF), that had funded special employment programs directed at the needs of new immigrants. HRDC has announced it plans to devolve all job training to the provinces (Vancouver Sun, “B.C. to take over federal job training”, April 25, 1997: A1). For a discussion of the effect of EI legislation generally see Jane Pulkingham, “Remaking the

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Social Divisions of Welfare: Gender, 'Dependency', and UI Reform", Studies in Political Economy, Volume 56 (Summer) 1998:7-48; and Human Resources Development Canada, Communications Branch, A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Employment System for Canada: Guide to the Employment Insurance Legislation, December 1995.

<sup>26</sup> Through the Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration (MRMI).

<sup>27</sup> Through the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training (MOEST).

<sup>28</sup> 'Mainstream' is a term that must be problematized. It is used here, as the settlement workers themselves so often use it, to speak of organizations whose mandate is to provide services to the general population, as distinct from those designed specifically for new immigrants and refugees. On the other hand, as already discussed, the experience of immigration is common in Vancouver and might well be considered the 'mainstream' today. Blurring these categories is part of settlement work. Many settlement workers themselves have an immigrant/refugee background, yet work as part of the 'mainstream' community to provide services needed by those recently arrived. Moreover, increasingly settlement workers are engaged in wider advocacy that brings immigrant/refugee issues into the 'mainstream' of debates on poverty and the welfare state.

<sup>29</sup> For example a recent survey of the needs of the Vietnamese community in East Vancouver has identified employment services and language training as the two most important issues they face. See MOSAIC and Britannia Social Services Centre, The Vietnamese Service Review Project: Final Report, May 1998. For a more detailed discussion of employment training needs of immigrants see Adrian Gibbons and Associates and Martin Spigelman Research Associates, Enhancing Opportunity: Meeting the Employment Training Needs of Recent Immigrants to British Columbia, prepared for the Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration, B.C.; Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, B.C.; Citizenship and Immigration Canada; and Human Resources Development Canada. March 1997.

<sup>30</sup> Human Resources Development Canada, Communications Branch, A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Employment System for Canada: Guide to the Employment Insurance Legislation, December 1995.

<sup>31</sup> As a result of lobbying by settlement agencies immigrants not on EI can now access some general employment assistance programs funded by HRDC; however all skills training programs remain open only to EI recipients.

<sup>32</sup> In British Columbia refugee claimants cannot get work permits and are also excluded from Income Assistance (welfare); refugee claimants only qualify for "hardship allowances", a maximum \$550 per month regardless of the size of the family. Thus refugee claimants have no access to any employment programs or settlement services until after they have been determined to be legitimate refugees and granted landed immigrant status,

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a process that usually takes several years. At the time of writing the provincial government has made a commitment to amend the policy regarding IA to allow refugee claimants regular access to welfare.

<sup>33</sup> HRDC is in the process of downloading all its employment training programs to the provinces, and in the process shifting from 'bloc funding' (where whole programs are contracted by the government) to a system of vouchers and student loans whereby individual clients will 'purchase' their seats in the program of their choice. This is creating a new level of uncertainty for non-profits. Among other issues it means that non-profits offering employment training must become certified educational institutions.

<sup>34</sup> The province, which is scheduled to take over AAP programs, is apparently keen to maintain Welcome House, though its future is still in doubt. Personal communication with a staff member at Welcome House.

<sup>35</sup> New services to the South Asian and Burmese communities were added to existing counsellors servicing African, East European, Former-Yugoslav, Kurdish/Arabic, Iranian, Spanish and Vietnamese communities.

<sup>36</sup> Another barrier noted for some women, particularly Muslim women, was the single form of LINC service delivery as co-educational, mixing men and women together in each class.

<sup>37</sup> Citizenship and Immigration, Immigration Legislative Review, Not Just Numbers: A Canadian Framework for Future Immigration, 1997.

<sup>38</sup> City of Vancouver, Social Planning Department, 1997 Community Services Grants Information Sheets: Instructions for Applicants, December 1996. This information was supplemented by discussions with a planner from the Social Planning Department.

<sup>39</sup> The implications were problematic for the non-profit that might become the 'super-organization', pushing it more into 'mainstream' service delivery and monitoring other sub-contractors; and equally problematic for those that might be left out or reduced to acting as a sub-contractor for another non-profit. For smaller very specialized non-profits the growth of one or two 'super-organizations' in the field could make it more difficult to survive at all. In addition, fears were expressed that the 'super-organization' might well be a 'mainstream' organization with inadequate resources or training to provide effective multicultural services.

<sup>40</sup> The cancellation of the year-long restructuring process, announced by the provincial government at a press conference on July 7<sup>th</sup>, came as a complete shock to the sector. Personal conversation with Interviewee 22.

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<sup>41</sup> On average women earn less than men across all occupational sectors in Canada, especially in sectors which are predominantly female. In addition, immigrant women and men earn lower wages than non immigrant women and men respectively. See for example Statistics Canada, Women in Canada: A Statistical Report, Third Edition, Ottawa: Ministry of Industry, 1995: chapters 6, 7 and 9.

<sup>42</sup> A number of concrete policy recommendations can be drawn from these interviews with settlement workers:

- 1) greater flexibility in eligibility and design of programs/services
- 2) better communication between funders and non-profits
- 3) longer (multi-year) funding commitments
- 4) more collaboration amongst funders to streamline funding applications and reporting/accountability procedures
- 5) funding directed to cover key gaps in services: employment skills training, advanced language training, health care services, child care services, youth services, seniors services, family counselling, extending all services to refugee claimants, and longer eligibility for settlement services.

<sup>43</sup> MOSAIC is identified here because it increasingly defines itself as a leader in advocacy and wishes to be known as such.

<sup>44</sup> “What is AMSSA?”, undated pamphlet (1998). See also” AMSSA Adopts Advocacy Policy”, AMSSA Update, January 6, 1998.

<sup>45</sup> Citizenship and Immigration, Immigration Legislative Review, Not Just Numbers: A Canadian Framework for Future Immigration, 1997.

<sup>46</sup> Discussion with the Chair of the Working Group on Poverty, June 12, 1998.

<sup>47</sup> Chair, WGP, op. cit.

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