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Multiculturalism and Local Government in Greater Vancouver

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## RIIM

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## **Multiculturalism and Local Government in Greater Vancouver**

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**Abstract:** This paper reports on a survey of multicultural policies and programs used by metropolitan Vancouver's municipal councils. The questions were designed to indicate the degree of commitment by local councils to the support of multiculturalism, as well as the provision of local services in an equitable and easily accessible manner for all residents. The survey reports on the use of: interpreting and translation services; distribution of policies to a range of sites and organizations; consultation and participation programs; targeting of specific groups in the community; and contact with cultural advocacy groups. The results show that while these policies are more common in 'older' municipalities with high numbers of immigrants (Vancouver, Richmond and Burnaby) they are rarely used in municipalities at the metropolitan periphery which are likely to take large numbers of immigrants in future years (i.e. those along the Fraser Valley). To provide a framework for the survey the paper discusses the role played by local government in developing multicultural policy and programs. Case studies are then presented that expand on the survey results. These focus upon local government strategies with regard to multiculturalism that have worked well, along with those which have been less successful.

**Key words:** Multiculturalism; local governments; Greater Vancouver

## Introduction

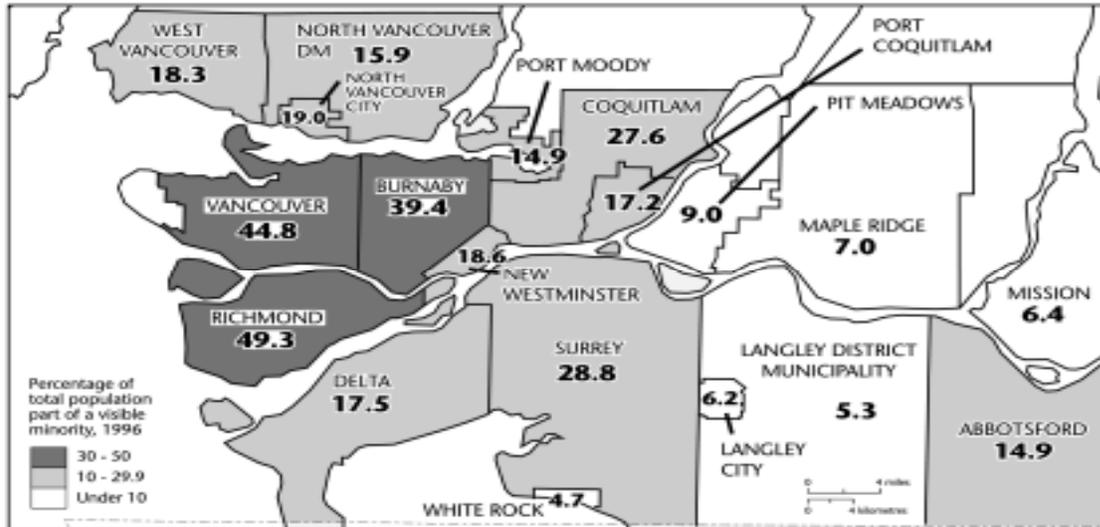
This paper reports on a survey of multicultural policies and programs administered by municipal councils in Greater Vancouver.<sup>1</sup> It addresses the overall paucity in our knowledge of multicultural policies conducted at the local government level when compared to those administered by other levels of government and non-government organizations (NGOs). The paper also addresses how local governments vary throughout the region in the type of policies and programs offered. International immigrants now constitute more than one in three residents in the Greater Vancouver region (The Laurier Institution 1999). Indeed, almost 200,000 people, or 30 per cent of all immigrants arrived here between 1991 and 1996. Yet, unlike earlier cohorts of immigrants, the vast majority of new arrivals in the last decade or so came from Asia and are comprised of ‘visible minorities’.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, close to 50 per cent of the 135,000 households headed by visible minority immigrants came in the ten years between 1986 and 1996. At the time of the last population census, more than a third of the region’s residents did not have English as a mother tongue. Vancouver now has the highest percentage share of recent non-English speaking minorities in Canada, mainly from Asia-Pacific countries (Hiebert 1999; Hutton 1998). Figure 1 indicates that the percentage of visible minorities varied widely throughout the Greater Vancouver region. The highest concentrations were found in the older ‘core’ municipal areas such as the City of Vancouver and the City of Richmond. Here, nearly half of the residents at the time of the 1996 Census recorded speaking a non-English language at home (Statistics Canada 1999a). While there is often an impression that Greater Vancouver’s new immigrant population is concentrated in just a few municipalities, Figure 1 shows significant numbers of visible minorities distributed throughout the region, including the north shore municipalities such as the City of North Vancouver. However, fewer numbers of visible minorities were recorded further east along the Fraser Valley, especially in municipalities such as the City of Langley and the District of Mission, although certain outer suburban authorities, such as the City of Abbotsford, have experienced significant growth in visible minorities (see also Hiebert 1999).

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this study, Greater Vancouver includes the 20 municipalities of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), together with the City of Abbotsford and the District of Mission (see Figure 1). Note that Bowen Island Municipality is a member of the GVRD, but was excluded from this study.

<sup>2</sup> The term ‘visible minority’ refers to non-White, non-Caucasian immigrants who trace their origins to Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and North, Central, and South America, and descendants of visible minority immigrants born in Canada. The term was used in the 1996 Population Census where it was defined as meaning persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who were “non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour” (Statistics Canada, 1999b: 101).

**Figure 1: Percentage of population who were part of a visible minority in Greater Vancouver local municipalities, 1996**



Note: The Village of Anmore, Village of Belcarra, and Village of Lion's Bay were included in the authors' survey but are not shown here due to their small size.

Source: derived from data in Statistics Canada (1999a)

Despite the dramatic shift in local population composition that the above figures imply, very little is known about how local municipal governments have responded, either by way of providing services to assist the settlement of new immigrants in their communities or to address on-going issues of multiculturalism. In a country that depends so much on immigration to maintain its demographic balance, it is important that we explore how we welcome and help new immigrants to integrate not only into Canadian society at large but also local communities. For instance, are key council policies and documents translated? Do councils and their staff provide specific forms of outreach that allow visible minorities to participate in planning issues? Moreover, is there a wide spatial variation in the provision of multicultural policies and programs by local councils throughout the Greater Vancouver area? This last point is particularly pertinent when considering demographic forecasts that project large increases in population in the outer ring of municipalities during the next 25 years. To what degree are these local governments 'multicultural ready' and willing to take proactive steps to provide services and programs to their ethnic populations?

To address these concerns the aim of the current study is to assess how local governments fit in the hierarchy of various jurisdictions addressing migration and multiculturalism issues, and how local services provided at the municipal level vary geographically from one jurisdiction to another. Towards the end of the paper we attempt also to flesh out the survey results with three case studies collected from site visits to local municipalities. They show in some detail how local government policies intersect with issues of multiculturalism and the growth of visible minorities from Asia in local populations.

The metropolitan region as a whole began to be more aware of Pacific Asia from the time of the 'Vancouver Expo' of 1986. In fact, abundant statistical evidence exists of the tangible flows that now connect the wider city region across the Pacific in terms of trade, airline routes, investment and cultural links (Edgington and Goldberg 1992; Hutton 1998). Still, despite growing enthusiasm for 'bridging the Pacific Rim' it is interesting to note that the first Chinese-Canadian councilor in Vancouver was not elected until 1981. Abu-Laban (1997:86) notes this is 'a remarkable fact given the very deep roots of the Chinese community in Vancouver' (see also Stasiulus 1997, on the issue of visible minority representation among local councilors). Abu-Laban (1997) also argues that although there has been increasing acknowledgment of the importance of immigration, race and ethnocultural diversity at the national and international level, there has been a relative neglect of the interplay of these factors at the city level. In addition, Andrew (1995) maintains that the impact of immigration from Asia as a whole has only recently been felt in terms of the need for urban services provided by municipalities. This is surprising, as at the city level the impacts of immigration are often strikingly intense, especially in terms of jobs, education and housing. Tindal and Tindal (1995) argue that in part this has been because local government has traditionally been accorded much less power in the Canadian system than provincial and Federal levels, and so lacks the mandate to address issues relating to immigration and multiculturalism within the constitution.

Thus, historically, the expansion of local government services (beyond the traditional focus on town planning and development regulations, waste disposal, and health and building inspection) was restricted by provincial legislation. But the situation is now much more flexible and in British Columbia (BC) the new *Local Government Act, 2000* gives councils sufficient autonomy to involve themselves in all manner of policy except those exclusive under the constitution to the senior levels of government (Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 2000). To date, though, there have been few extra resources from provincial government sources to extend the range of services so as to cope with multicultural issues. Mitchell (1993) suggests a more portentous reason for this delay in recognition by local governments by noting that it is only since Vancouver and other 'global cities' embraced

Asia-Pacific business and trade that a 'new wave' of programs and policies for multiculturalism and anti-racism has emerged.

Irrespective of new rationales for multiculturalism and recent developments in trade, non-English-speaking immigrants to Greater Vancouver face many problems when searching for work, finding affordable housing, accessing health and counselling services, and receiving English language training. These pressing issues clearly implicate a range of social and economic policies that in part local government has some authority over. Moreover, the rise in immigration levels during the 1990s has occurred at the same time that councils are concerned to maintain satisfactory levels of traditional services in the face of declining resources. This is typified by the 'downloading' of program responsibilities from senior to local governments, without a commensurate transfer of funding and other resources (Tindal and Tindal 1995).

This study of 22 municipalities in Greater Vancouver (see Note 1) accords with the growing international literature on the challenges of urban planning for multicultural and diverse populations (see King 1996; Qadeer 1997; Sandercock 1998; Fincher and Jacobs 1998; Douglass and Friedmann 1998, and Burayidi 2000). Following a review of responsibilities for multiculturalism policy in British Columbia (BC) and Vancouver, we report on a survey of access and equity policies in local councils. These policies range from culturally sensitive employment programs to specific proposals for non-English speaking communities. The jurisdictional breadth of the study also acknowledges intra-metropolitan differences in the scale and impact of immigration and allows us to address the spatial dimension of local policy responses. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected in such a way as to compare the intra-metropolitan variations in the provision of services and assess the geographical relationship between levels of visible minorities in the local population and local programs associated with visible minority status.

We then present three case studies to elaborate upon the survey results and to focus upon local policy strategies that have worked, as well as to show where multicultural conflict has occurred at the community level. We conclude the paper with an assessment of local government's 'multicultural readiness' in the Vancouver metropolitan region.

### **Local Government, Multiculturalism and Immigration in British Columbia**

Our first concern is to establish the overall role played by local municipalities in the wider 'policy network' relating to multiculturalism and immigration programs. We quickly review the legislation, policies, programs and services initiated by all four levels of government (including regional

government in the form of the Greater Vancouver Regional District, GVRD)<sup>3</sup> and the non-government sector. In totality they reflect a vision of multiculturalism or inclusivity in the region, and a society based upon mutual respect, equality, fairness and harmony. In summary, a panoply of government organizations, as well as non-profit organizations (often called non-government organizations or NGOs), provides either funds and/or services under the rubric of immigration settlement services or multicultural policies and programs (see Table 1). By contrast with the Federal and British Columbia (BC) governments, local councils in Greater Vancouver have formally taken little responsibility for multicultural planning. Of course, in part this is because responsibility for immigration is shared under the Constitution between the Federal government and the provinces, with Federal legislation prevailing (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 1999). The Immigration Act (Section 108) allows the Federal Minister to enter into agreements with the provinces to facilitate the coordination and implementation of immigration policies and programs. The fact that local councils in BC have to coordinate with other levels of government as well as the NGOs reflects well the broader trend in local government towards 'partnerships,' 'contracts' and decentralized working arrangements with 'third force' organizations (as described by Elcock 1993; Wilson and Game 1994).

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<sup>3</sup> Greater Vancouver (about 2.0 million regional population) has a distinct type of metropolitan coordination mechanism as in 1969 the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) was established to coordinate development and to provide selected services, such as water and hospitals, for some 20 member municipalities (see GVRD, 2000). The GVRD can be thought of as "a municipal federation of local governments dedicated to improving the quality of life in the region while accommodating growth in the most efficient and appropriate manner" (ibid.). It functions primarily on the basis of consensus-building among local municipalities, with strong (but not always consistent) support from the provincial government. It is a multi-purpose service agency, not a true level of government. While membership is voluntary, the agency has sufficient power and legitimacy to be able to shape development in the entire region. Between 1990 and 1996 the GVRD planners in partnership with its member municipalities of the region carried out a wide-scale planning exercise called 'Creating Our Future' (GVRD, 1990). It also generated a region-wide plan for managing growth - the 'Liveable Region Strategic Plan' (GVRD, 1996). Both plans have garnered wide support throughout the region.

**Table 1: Multiculturalism and immigration services in Greater Vancouver: division of functions by levels of government (including the GVRD and NGOs)**

Level of Government	Major Functions
Federal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immigration Act, 1976</li> <li>• Citizen and Immigration Canada (immigration control, refugees)</li> <li>• Immigration Settlement and Adaptation Program (reception programs)</li> <li>• HOST Program (volunteers)</li> <li>• LINC Program (language training)</li> <li>• Adjustment Renewal Program (income support)</li> <li>• Funding for BC Government (BC Multiculturalism)</li> <li>• HRDC (employment and training)</li> <li>• Canadian Heritage (minority language training)</li> </ul>
British Columbia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiculturalism Act 1993</li> <li>• Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration (funding for settlement services and multiculturalism, carried out by NGOs)</li> </ul>
GVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-term strategic planning and development</li> <li>• Coordination among municipalities</li> </ul>
Local municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grants to NGOs (some)</li> <li>• Health, leisure, planning</li> </ul>
NGOs (e.g. SUCCESS, MOSAIC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Settlement services</li> <li>• Counseling</li> <li>• Advocacy</li> </ul>

Sources: see text

To begin with, the Federal Government administers Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), an agency with branches in BC. CIC is responsible for determining who will be granted refugee status to Canada, as well as how many individuals will be permitted into the country. It also funds a range of activities aimed at helping newcomers become integrated into Canadian society and economically independent within a year of their arrival (or as soon as possible). This is accomplished through the programs listed in Table 1, together with those of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and the Federal Department of Heritage (Canadian Heritage). Prior to 1999, Federal funding for settlement services went directly to NGOs in BC on a ‘project by project’ basis (Creese 1998). But much of this financial sourcing has now been largely transferred from the Federal to the provincial government, so that ‘BC Multiculturalism’ (currently the Multiculturalism Branch of the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services, BC) has seen an increase in its staff,

including the direct transfer of some Federal staff to the provincial level. The Federal government also provides job training services through Human Resources Development Canada, including employment training, job search skills, and job finding clubs. The Federal Department of Heritage (Canadian Heritage), under the Secretary of State, provides funding for the language teaching of minority immigrant communities, as well as grants and contributions for volunteer activities in the areas of race relations and cross-cultural understanding (Canadian Heritage 1999).

The BC Government has become more committed to multiculturalism policies and programs since the early 1990s. It now funds a wide range of settlement programs carried out by NGOs, including funding for settlement councilors, language instructors at various language institutions, community based research and heritage language instructors (Table 1). It has its own Multiculturalism Act, 1993, and the Community Liaison Branch of Multiculturalism BC administers settlement and multiculturalism grant funding to non-profit community organizations (Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration, BC 1999). As intimated above, the new partnership between the BC and Federal governments is designed to avoid overlapping services and funds, and give BC a greater hand in determining immigration policy to reflect the province's distinctive economic and social circumstances.

Creese (1998) argues that this re-organization of funding arrangements has also been associated with funding cutbacks, so that overall the change has inconvenienced the provision of settlement services in the NGO sector in Vancouver. Nonetheless, the growth of non-profit organizations that provide a wide range of settlement services has been a distinctive feature of the multicultural policy scene throughout the 1990s.

Settlement agencies in greater Vancouver included groups such as the Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (ISS) and the Multilingual Orientation Service Association for Immigrant Communities (MOSAIC). Both are leading multi-ethnic immigrant settlement agencies. Another leading NGO is The United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society (SUCCESS), formed in 1973. While this began as an agency dealing specifically with a single ethnic community it has now diversified its services. For instance, it has set up services at the Vancouver International Airport and the Burnaby-Coquitlam area that have an interpreting bank of more than a dozen languages. These agencies and others have come together in an umbrella organization called the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC (AMSSA). Further, SUCCESS in particular has been identified as a 'formidable lobby group in its own right,' distinguished for its ability to attract the attention of local political and business elites and carry out considerable private fund-raising (Creese 1998).

Local municipalities are therefore implicated in a ‘hierarchical network’ of multicultural policy machinery, involving flows of funding and program arrangements from the Federal and the provincial governments, and then on to the local NGOs (Table 1). In general, local governments might be considered the ‘Cinderella’ level of government when it comes to supporting immigrant services and multiculturalism. For instance, there has been growth in overall funding for immigrant services and multicultural programs by national and BC governments (especially for NGOs), alongside a relative neglect by municipalities in the region. Nonetheless, it will be shown later in the paper that a small number of local municipalities (e.g. the City of Vancouver) have implemented supporting policies and also grant funds to their local NGOs for multicultural activities.

Local municipalities in Greater Vancouver are also implicated in ‘lateral policy networks’ as members of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD). Due to its region-wide planning responsibilities this body also has a stake in multiculturalism (Table 1). Levels of overseas immigration into metropolitan Vancouver are monitored closely as they impact on how much growth the region will have to accommodate. It has been estimated that international immigration accounted for over 80 per cent of the region’s growth between 1991 and 1996. If recent trends continue, the population of the metropolitan Vancouver region (currently over 2 million) is projected to increase by 58 per cent, or another 1.2 million people between 1996 and 2021. Much of this will have to be accommodated in suburban municipalities along the Fraser Valley (Urban Futures Institute 1998).

Besides the need for new ‘hard’ infrastructure requirements (roads and public works and so on), rapid growth and dispersion of new communities through the region potentially has implications for language training and schooling as well as other required amenities for multicultural and ethnic communities. Accordingly, one of the strategies of the GVRD’s ‘Livable Region Strategic Plan’ is the provision of an equitable distribution of public social and cultural services and facilities (GVRD 1996). To carry out this part of the overall ‘vision’ for the region the GVRD has taken steps to increase its capability to play a coordination role among local government authorities, to pay greater attention to inter-governmental coordination in the area of social planning, and to promote multiculturalism in Greater Vancouver. In part, this policy is being fulfilled through the provision of a Regional Social Issues Subcommittee, provision of information which celebrates the multicultural region, preparation of an Arts and Culture Plan for the region (which will include programs to recognize diversity), and commissioning research into multiculturalism issues (interview with N. Knight, Policy and Planning Office, Greater Vancouver Regional District, Burnaby, June 1999).

## The Access and Equity Survey

The above section has outlined broadly the policy actors involved in immigrant settlement and multicultural issues in the region, and the overall paucity of effort by local governments. Moreover, the uneven spatial distribution of immigrants in metropolitan Vancouver hints at a likely uneven spatial response by local governments to changes in the wider community. We now turn to a survey of the 22 local municipalities in the Greater Vancouver region shown in Figure 1.<sup>4</sup> The survey questions were designed to reflect the degree of commitment by local councils to supporting multiculturalism and service delivery in an equitable, inclusive and easily accessible manner for all residents. Results are shown in Tables 2 to 7. The survey asked local municipalities to report on the use of:

- official multicultural policy statements; yes/no (Table 2)
- interpreting and translation services; 8 different indicators (Table 3)
- steps taken to inform all residents about available services; 18 indicators (Table 4)
- consultation and participation techniques for non-English speaking minorities; 11 indicators (Table 5)
- targeting particular ethnic groups in the community for special services; 5 indicators (Table 6)
- frequent contact (i.e. at least once a month) with cultural advocacy groups within the local population, 4 indicators (Table 7)

Conceptually, these indicators measure programs and policies ranging from the simple (and low-cost) generation of inclusive multicultural policy statements, to programs with on-going budget implications such as interpreting and translation, and on to more targeted (and therefore more expensive) participation techniques for engaging local non-English speaking communities, as well as specific programs, such as nurturing locally-based NGOs that deal with immigrant community issues. The 22 councils were grouped under three 'geographic' headings - core,' 'middle' and 'outer' (for precise groupings see Figure 1 and notes to Table 2). The raw scores for each of the 47 separate indicators are shown in the five tables set out below (Tables 2 to 7).

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<sup>4</sup> The survey was conducted in the fall of 1999 following a series of pilot interviews. The methodology involved administering a formal questionnaire together with a follow-up interview with a planning officer involved in either multicultural issues or strategic planning in each municipality. The questionnaire was drawn from one used in a survey of Australian local government and multiculturalism conducted by colleagues at the University of New South Wales in 1996/1997 (see Thompson, et al., 1998; Edgington et al., 2001).

**Table 2: Municipalities that have a multicultural policy; core, middle and outer areas**

Core (N = 4)	4
Middle (N = 9)	3
Outer (N = 9)	1
Total (N = 22)	8

Notes:

Core = City of Vancouver; City of Richmond; City of Burnaby; City of New Westminster

Middle = Village of Lions Bay; District of West Vancouver; District of North Vancouver; City of North Vancouver; City of Port Moody; City of Coquitlam; City of Port Coquitlam; City of Delta; City of Surrey

Outer = City of White Rock; Village of Anmore; Village of Belcarra; City of Pitt Meadows; District of Maple Ridge; District of Mission; City of Langley; Township of Langley; City of Abbotsford

Source: fieldwork, September – November 1999

**Table 3: Municipalities that use interpreting and related services**

	Core	Middle	Outer	Total
Interpreting/ translating services	N=4	N=9	N=9	N=22
Multilingual pamphlets	4	3	0	7
Bilingual staff	3	3	0	6
On-site interpreters	2	2	1	5
Multilingual signs	2	0	1	3
Telephone interpreter services	2	0	0	2
Multilingual letters	0	1	0	1
Community notice board	1	0	0	1
Dual handset phones at counters	0	0	0	0

Notes and Source: see Table 3

**Table 4: Municipalities that send information about new policies and programs to specified sites/representatives (including non-English speaking background organizations)**

	Core	Middle	Outer	Total
Distribution to site or representative	N=4	N=9	N=9	N=22
Libraries	3	4	1	8
Counter inquiry counter	1	3	2	6
Community centres	3	2	0	5
Ethnic organizations	3	1	0	4
Ethnic print media	2	2	0	4
Immigrant resource centre	1	1	0	2
Child care centres	1	0	0	1
Ethnic radio	1	0	0	1
Health care	1	0	0	1

Social and sporting clubs	0	0	0	0
Religious centres	0	0	0	0
Early childhood centres	0	0	0	0
Religious schools	0	0	0	0
Ethnic day schools	0	0	0	0
Post office/banks	0	0	0	0
Citizen ceremonies	0	0	0	0
Health care professionals serving indigenous NESB people	0	0	0	0
English classes	0	0	0	0

Notes and Source: see Table 3

A number of observations can be made about the distributions embedded in these tables. First, at a broad-scale, the findings suggest a rather low overall ‘multicultural readiness’ among Greater Vancouver’s municipalities.<sup>5</sup> Thus, only eight out of 22 municipalities (approximately 36 per cent) had any kind of official multicultural policy statement (Table 2). Just seven municipalities used multilingual pamphlets to inform their non-English speaking residents of local policies (30 per cent). Only six had bilingual staff (including French speaking staff) (27 per cent) and a mere five councils (24 per cent) had on-site interpreters located at municipal offices (see the ‘Total’ column in Table 3). Eight municipalities (35 per cent) distributed their policies to local libraries, but far fewer did so to locations where new non-English speaking immigrants would normally congregate (e.g. only two, or 9 per cent of all councils distributed any materials to immigrant resources centres, Table 4). While ‘public participation’ and outreach programs by local government are now fairly ubiquitous through Greater Vancouver, only a small number of councils and their administrations recorded consultation techniques that were targeted specifically to non-English speaking background minorities. For instance, just six of municipalities (26 per cent) distributed publications such as planning documents to these groups and only three (13 per cent) held public meetings that encompassed non-English communities (Table 5). Seven municipalities (30 per cent) targeted particular ethnic groups within the community for special participation in order to provide services for them (Table 6). But only a small number were in frequent contact with local cultural advocacy groups (e.g. just three or 13 per cent, had frequent contact with local ethnic cultural associations or immigrant resource centres, Table 7).

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<sup>5</sup> We acknowledge the origin of the term ‘multicultural readiness’ with our colleague, David Ley, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia.

**Table 5: Municipalities that use consultation and participation techniques for non-English speaking background (NESB) minorities**

Technique used (must have some NESB component)	Core N=4	Middle N=9	Outer N=9	Total N=22
Publications	3	2	1	6
Public meeting	3	0	0	3
Focus group/workshop	2	1	0	3
Polling/survey	2	1	0	3
Advising committee	1	2	0	3
Advertising	2	0	0	2
Research/project officer	2	0	0	2
Consultative committee	1	1	0	2
Discussion paper	1	0	0	1
Public inquiry	0	0	0	0
Seminar/conference	0	0	0	0

Notes and source: see Table 3

**Table 6: Municipalities which target specific ethnic groups in order to increase their participation**

Group targeted	Core N=4	Middle N=9	Outer N=9	Total N=22
Large ethnic groups				
within the community	3	3	1	7
Elderly people of NESB	2	1	0	3
NESB women	1	0	0	1
Small or hidden ethnic group	1	0	0	1
Children in ethno-specific child care	0	0	0	0

Notes and Source: see Table 3

**Table 7: Municipalities which have frequent contact with specific cultural advocacy groups**

Cultural Advocacy Groups	Core N=4	Middle N=9	Outer N=9	Total N=22
Cultural associations	1	2	0	3
Immigrant resource centres	1	2	0	3
Ethnic organizations	1	1	0	2
Religious leaders	1	0	0	1

Notes and Source: see Table 3

Second, beyond these aggregate figures there lies an uneven geography related to the provision of multicultural programs and services at the local municipal level within Greater Vancouver. Indeed, there appears to be a distinct ‘policy gradient’. This ranges from relatively high levels of multicultural policies and program implementation in the core municipalities of Vancouver, Richmond, Burnaby and New Westminster, down to much lower levels of provision in both the middle group of councils and the ‘outer’ eastern municipalities along the Fraser Valley. For instance, the four core municipalities recorded much higher provision of interpreting and related services than the nine middle ring municipalities (Table 3), and the nine outer ring municipalities of the metropolitan region recorded hardly any at all.

Unfortunately, there is no information on the varying demand for services by new immigrants and non-English speaking visible minorities throughout Greater Vancouver. We do not know, for instance, whether visible minorities that are located in different areas vary in competency to deal with issues such as jobs and housing without the need for special services. In other words, the survey results indicate that outer areas supply fewer services directed to new immigrants at the municipal level, but there is no evidence of any changing measure of need in different places within the region. However, on face value and assuming demand for services is fairly uniform overall, these results suggest a significant ‘policy gap’ between the older (and somewhat richer) municipalities in the metropolitan core and the remainder of the Greater Vancouver region (middle and outer municipalities).

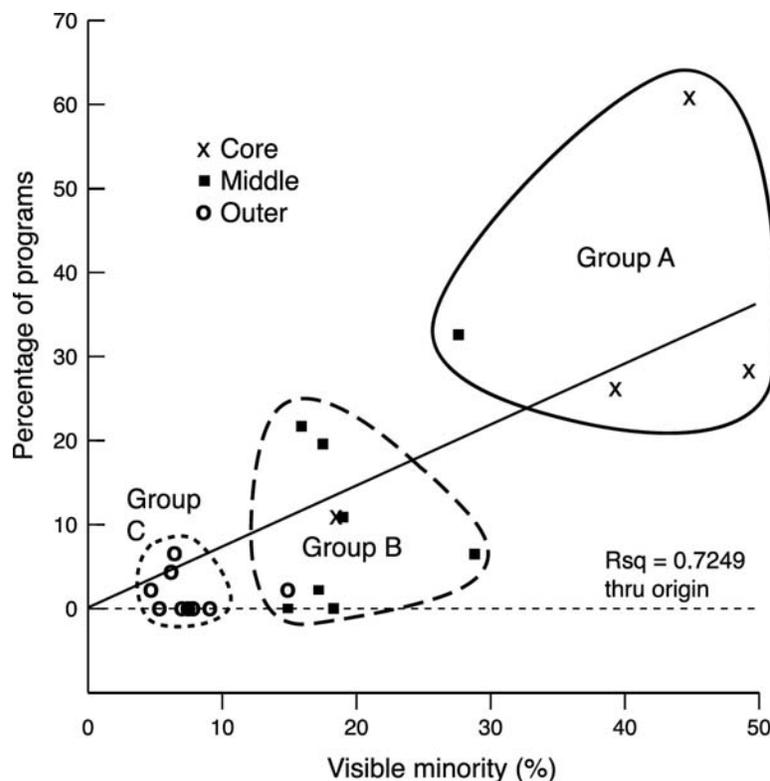
The core municipalities as a group have long recognized the need to address the challenges posed by a changing demographic mix in their local communities. They have also had a deeper commitment to social planning services, such as the City of Vancouver, which has supported a small but innovative Social Planning Department since the 1970s (see the City of Vancouver case study later on). In addition, several local politicians in core municipalities (such as the former Mayor of Vancouver [1980-86], Michael Harcourt) have played a key role through their personal commitment to social planning. In the City of Richmond, the pressures embodied in a changing demographic mix led to higher degrees of participation in the late 1980s and the targeting of municipal services to new population groups, especially overseas Chinese from Hong Kong (see later for further details on some of the land use conflicts recorded in Richmond as a result of large numbers of new immigrant residents). In the ‘outer municipalities,’ such as Abbotsford and Coquitlam, a lack of resources was the reason most often cited by local government planners during follow-up interviews for not pursuing a multicultural program. They stated that because social planning was not compulsory in section 530 of the *Municipal Affairs Act* (now the *Local Government Act*, 2000) neither council

members nor local taxpayer groups recognized it as a priority. Especially in the areas east of the City of Burnaby, along the Fraser Valley highway, there was a feeling that multicultural problems were too complex and expensive to be borne by local government.

Finally, among the 22 municipalities our analysis allowed an examination of the overall relationship between the percentage of local government population that was part of a visible minority and the percentage coverage of the 47 multicultural policies and programs. Figure 2 uses data from the survey to plot the local governments along these two dimensions. The results indicate that at a broad-scale there was indeed a strong relationship between each municipality's proportion of visible minorities in the total population and the percentage of the 47 multicultural services and programs provided. Three groupings can be identified in Figure 2. Thus, four of the 22 municipalities having relatively high percentages of visible minorities (Group A, mainly municipalities in the 'core' region) also recorded higher than average coverage (over 25 per cent) of the 47 policy and program indicators. Conversely, 11 municipalities (Group C, including nearly all 'outer' municipalities) recorded both low local percentage share of visible minority populations and very low coverage of the 47 multicultural policies and programs (less than 10 per cent). A mixed group of 8 municipalities (Group B) recorded intermediate levels of visible minorities in local populations as well as coverage of the programs and policies. This overall relationship was tested by a Spearman's Rho analysis, which was found to indicate a correlation of 0.7249 (through the origin), significant at the 0.1 level (2-tailed test).

This above analysis is unfortunately limited due to the crudity of the municipal framework for indicators as well as the small N numbers in tables 3 to 7. Nonetheless, the general position established by the authors' survey is that there is indeed a positive relationship between levels of visible minorities in the population and level of local government service delivery to assist new immigrants and support multiculturalism. This association may indicate that municipalities are able and willing to respond to changing demographics only after a critical threshold of visible minorities in their total population has been reached (say around 25-30 per cent). For municipalities with larger and more diverse communities (e.g. Richmond and Burnaby) there is perhaps a 'push' towards multicultural policies. Yet for other, smaller, municipalities (e.g. Langley City and Langley District), scarce resources may deter councils from expanding programs to what are perceived of as low levels of non-English speaking populations (currently around 5-6 per cent). The precise dynamics and constraints on any municipality's commitment to multiculturalism needs to be examined by further research, as do the geographical variations in demand for services among visible minorities in the Greater Vancouver region.

**Figure 2: The relationship between the percentage of local government population that is part of a visible minority and the percentage coverage of multicultural policies and programs.**



Source: derived from 1995 Census and authors' 1999 survey results

With the general framework established through this survey, the paper now moves to examine case studies from three local municipalities, involving two core municipalities and one from the middle area. While not all 'areas' are reviewed in this section, these accounts help to explain in some detail the challenges posed by multicultural populations. They also indicate important policy conflicts as well as successful innovative programs adopted by specific local councils.

### **Case Studies Of Multiculturalism and Local Government Programs**

#### *The City of Vancouver CityPlan*

The City of Vancouver has a population of 514,000 (1996 Census) and comprises the leading financial, business and service centre for both the GVRD and British Columbia as a whole. It encompasses distinct neighbourhoods and communities, some associated with particular immigrant groups (Hiebert 1999). The City's major multicultural initiatives have been associated with its Social Planning Department established about 30 years ago, which at that time was the very first in Canada

(City of Vancouver 1998). Consequently, relative to the other metropolitan municipalities, Vancouver City Council has had a long history of social policy involvement in the delivery of social services and cultural issues.

The City also has a very diverse set of communities (over 30 ethnic groups in total) and about half of its residents do not speak English as a first language or at all in the home (Social Planning, Community Services Group 1999). Indeed, language difficulties represent one aspect where new immigrants often have problems in accessing council services and participating in planning exercises. An interesting breakthrough in community involvement in policies and plans came as part of the City of Vancouver's 'CityPlan' initiative, a 'locally-based visioning exercise' to guide council's overall strategies that commenced in 1992 (City of Vancouver 1995). In order to overcome the problem of reaching out to diverse communities with varying English language skills, the council's Social Planning Department and CityPlan team established a number of award-winning initiatives (McAfee et al. 1995). These included securing a staff of volunteers from the various local communities to act as facilitators, as well as volunteer artists to help participants display their ideas for the city on large coloured panels. Ethnic media were used to release new policy pronouncements and to cover issues raised by the CityPlan process. A variety of 'storefront' information booths were located throughout the municipality and key documents used in the planning process were translated into Chinese, Hindi, Punjabi, Vietnamese, Spanish and French. A multilingual phone line was also created to encourage the views of people who did not wish to communicate with planning staff in person (Edgington 1999).

This ambitious approach to participation was used in 'follow-on' CityPlan exercises in local neighbourhoods. Moreover, in 1995, Council approved a City Diversification Strategy, which identified issues concerning communications between council staff and the increasingly diverse population. Since then, councillors and Department Heads of the City's bureaucracy have become closely involved in community planning. The council's aim is to reach a consistent approach in outreach programs across all functions of Council, and a well-resourced Corporate Communications Branch is responsible for translating the City's documents and information brochures (interview with Baldwin Wong, Social Planner, City of Vancouver, October 1999).

#### *City of Richmond: Land Use and Housing Conflict*

The evolution of policy responses to immigration and multiculturalism in Richmond, an inner suburban community of approximately 150,000 population (1996), serves to exemplify new terrains of planning innovation (and inter-cultural conflict) within the GVRD. The planning task for

Richmond has long been intensely challenging. This has been due to the special ecological assets of the municipality (including a major estuarine wildfowl preserve), the conflict between urban and agricultural uses within the rich alluvial lands within Richmond, and the externalities associated with the presence of Canada's second largest international airport (YVR) within the municipal territory.

The rapid increase in international immigration over the last 15 years imposed a new set of pressures on a local planning system already under stress. To underscore the magnitude of immigration within this period, it may be noted that immigrants represented 31.5 per cent of the Richmond's population in 1986, the majority of British and European origin. But only a decade later they had increased to almost one-half of the municipal population (48.3 per cent), with the majority of the recent immigrants now arriving from Asian societies, and in particular from Hong Kong, China and Taiwan (Ley 1999). The implications of this large-scale immigration were of course observed within a number of public realms and policy areas. But the most immediately contentious issue related to the housing preferences of many of the new immigrants. This was manifested in the much-publicized 'mega-house' (or 'monster house') debate over the large dwellings, catering primarily for newly arrived Chinese populations, but perceived as grossly out of scale by the local, traditional community as (see Ley 1995; Ray, Halseth and Johnson 1997).

At one level the 'monster house' controversy related to objections of longstanding (and mainly Anglo-background) citizens both to the scale and design features of new homes built for many new immigrant families. Most of the older houses in Richmond's residential neighbourhoods were indeed of modest dimensions, constructed significantly below the zoned potential of the single-family sites. Many of these older houses were demolished by recent immigrants, to be replaced by houses built out to the maximum floorspace allowable in the local by-laws, both to accommodate the extended families common to new immigrant cohorts, and also to realize the potential value of the (increasingly expensive) residential lots. Yet the most pejorative connotation of the 'monster house' usage related more to what many viewed as outlandishly ostentatious and unsympathetic design values – such as their characteristic pastel exteriors, box-like shape, garishly-tiled flat roofs, pillars framing 'cathedral-style' front entrances, and paved front yards, with little or no landscaping (Ray, Halseth and Johnson 1997).

There were no doubt legitimate objections to these 'monster houses' on aesthetic grounds among Richmond residents who vigorously opposed their proliferation within the municipality's neighbourhoods. But the debate, which permeated public meetings, letters to the editors of the local press, television coverage and City council sessions, soon assumed a harsher and more hostile tone. Not only were the 'monster houses' depicted as inimical to the traditional scale and design attributes

of Richmond's established residential neighbourhoods, but their tendency (at least indirectly) to inflate housing prices and residential taxes were seen as presaging a classic invasion and succession process. In this way the more affluent new immigrants were perceived as displacing existing households, and thus dramatically reshaping the social morphology of the community. The vehemence of some of these objections (perhaps predictably) invoked a vigorous counter-reaction among new immigrants, including accusations of racism and discrimination, and indeed the controversy was largely structured around (if not defined by) race-situated constituencies (interview with Kari Huhtala, Social/Community Planner, City of Richmond, Richmond, June 1999).

Richmond council and planning staff recognized the particularly divisive and destructive nature of the monster house conflict. They undertook a series of public meetings (including a special community task force) to address the issue, culminating in no fewer than seven residential development by-law amendments implemented between November 1993 and June 1995. These included provisions relating to (notably) required setbacks, landscaping, and the building 'envelope' (interview with Huhtala, *op.cit.*). The City was instrumental in largely shifting the locus of the debate from a hostile inter-ethnic arena to a 'normal' community planning process, resulting in a series of compromise by-law amendments which, while not totally satisfying to either principal party, comprised a mutual accommodation of interests.

The controversy over 'monster houses' in Richmond no doubt left a legacy of bitterness or grievance among some parties. But in the half decade since the effective resolution of the debate, it seems apparent that a significant measure of progress in community integration has been achieved. This evident progress notwithstanding, there is still the larger question of how new landscape and urban design preferences of recent immigrant groups can be inserted into mature residential communities, as the issue entails conflicts over identity and cultural expression not easily reconciled within traditional planning processes (Domae 1998). While this case study cannot claim to review any particular innovative program, it accentuates the willingness of the planning department to strike a compromise to satisfy the needs of new immigrants and established residents.

Interviews with a range of service agencies in Richmond (the City council, local RCMP, School District, and Richmond Hospital) revealed that there was a willingness to provide substantial public services in the Cantonese and/or Mandarin languages. Yet while this was welcomed by the local Chinese community there was a major challenge facing the municipality. This involved how to avoid the Chinese community remaining isolated from long-term residents. Some feared that two distinct cultures were emerging. For instance, the 'Chinese shopping centres' established in Richmond during the 1990s, together with other amenities and language facilities that made

Richmond so convenient to Hong Kong and other Chinese immigrants, also tend to function as a ‘cultural shield’ between them and the mainstream Canadian society (comments made at a Metropolis Community Focus Group, Richmond Cultural Centre, June 1997). Armstrong (2001) comments that “many school children, normally the fastest group to pick up a new culture, are not doing so because they are dropped into schools and neighbourhoods where most youngsters are now Chinese.” To address this issue, the city of Richmond, which has predominantly English-speaking officials, has attempted over the years to reach out to the local Chinese community and explain council services. While translations are available of certain council publicity sheets and information brochures, this has been sporadic rather than systematic. Often major events are provided to break down barriers between the traditionally English-background council and the new Chinese and other non-English speaking communities, and council planners will also attend and provide stalls in the ethnic communities’ own ‘cultural fairs’ (interview with Huhtala, op.cit.).

*City of Surrey: Intercultural Inclusivity and ‘Eracism’ Forum*

The City of Surrey (population 340,000 in 1996) lies about 20 kms from Vancouver’s downtown, and during the 1990s it ranked among the fastest growing municipalities in Canada. Originally a farming community Surrey is now the second largest council by population and is the largest by area in the metropolitan Vancouver region. It is expected to double its population by the year 2025. While the municipalities of Richmond, Burnaby and Vancouver may be the most ethnically diverse cities in the metropolitan region, Surrey has its own distinctive profile. The 1996 Census showed that non-English speaking ethnic communities – mainly Punjabi – comprised around 20 per cent of the residents (City of Surrey Planning and Development Department 1998). Indeed, the majority of immigrants to the metropolitan region from India (56 per cent) settled in Surrey in 1996, while only 19 per cent chose the City of Vancouver. The larger family size prevalent in the Indian immigrant community drives a need for the more affordable outer suburban housing that can be found in Surrey and so accounts for this difference (see also Hiebert 1999).

As with many other municipalities in the metropolitan region there is a blanket Council policy supporting multiculturalism (City of Surrey 1994). But unlike the more comprehensive approach of the City of Vancouver this is implemented in Surrey on *ad hoc* lines as the opportunities arise and budgets allow, through service delivery departments such as engineering, health and planning. Social planning staff reported that the City of Surrey has recently been involved in three major areas involving access and equity issues, as well as public participation programs which recognize multiculturalism (interview with Barbara Beblo, Senior Planner, and Lesley Aronson, Associate Planner, City of Surrey, Planning Department, April 1999). First, there has been an ‘equity

in employment' program carried out through the Council's Human Resources Department. Second, The City's Parks, Recreation and Culture Department launched a Task Force on Intercultural Inclusivity to look at barriers experienced by ethnic communities in accessing Departmental programs, facilities and services.

The study, which was funded by a BC provincial government grant, identified a lack of cultural knowledge and cultural sensitivity in Council as a whole. In addition, drawing from the perceptions of non-English residents in Surrey it highlighted the limited program choice in council's cultural and recreation facilities (City of Surrey 1997). Based on these findings, in 1996 the Department developed a mandate on how city facilities (e.g. parks and community centres) might play a role in overcoming isolation among certain immigrant communities, and so facilitate social contact between the various groups in Surrey's diverse population. The City council as a whole set out to develop further initiatives with regard to inclusive programs and service delivery. A third initiative involved the setting up of a weekend public forum on cultural diversity called the 'Eracism Forum'. This was essentially a 'stocktaking exercise' involving the City as well as many local groups in the community (schools, police and community groups), which identified successes and challenges in meeting the needs of a multi-ethnic community. Representatives from the City of Surrey gave logistical support and the Chair of the Social Planning Committee made presentations. Workshops for this event included workforce issues in the Council, diversity training for its staff, community involvement, the role of the media, and how to creating a welcoming environment for new immigrants (City of Surrey 1999).

Overall, these various case studies indicate that local governments have an important role in providing access and equitable services for new immigrants. Indeed, despite the substantial part that Federal and provincial governments (as well as NGOs) have played in this area, the local level of government may have a special responsibility for multiculturalism policy as it is often at the front-line of issues as a consequence of each city's changing demographic profile.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper we have offered a description and analysis of local policy issues (and experiences) associated with large-scale international immigration in Greater Vancouver. There are significant geographical outcomes from this research. The results of the access and equity survey in Greater Vancouver suggests that only a few municipalities – mainly confined to the region's traditional core areas – had developed anything like a necessary range of policies and programs to deal with a more

diverse population. As future waves of immigrants settle further eastwards along the Fraser Valley, then the low level of ‘multicultural readiness’ by ‘middle’ and ‘outer’ municipalities may prove particularly problematic. This is due partly we believe to either perceived or real resource and jurisdictional constraints, which act as impediments to effective local responses to international immigration. Local authorities in Canada currently lack constitutional obligations to respond to higher levels of immigration and a more multicultural population. This no doubt conditions and constrains attitudes among elected officials and municipal staff, as well as limits the scope of effective response.<sup>6</sup> Still other likely restrictions on providing multicultural policies and programs include organizational, political and attitudinal constraints within local councils and their administrations. Local political support (either by councilors or by key staff) is probably another critical factor influencing the degree to which local government implements effective multicultural policies. The ways in which these and other factors have operated in Greater Vancouver, however, needs to be examined by further research. Similarly, the geographical variation in need for local services by new immigrants and long-term visible minorities throughout the GVRD region also should also be assessed.

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<sup>6</sup> This was recently acknowledged in a special workshop hosted by the Federal Privy Council and Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, during which the challenge of accommodating new immigrant populations was identified as the leading policy challenge for Canada’s largest cities (‘Cities and Immigration’ workshop, Ottawa, 30 March, 2000).

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