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Integration in the Metropolis

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**RIIM Public Consultation Retreat July 8, 2004:
Summary of Proceedings**

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RIIM

Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis

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RIIM Public Consultation Retreat

July 8, 2004
SFU Harbour Centre

Summary of Proceedings

Introduction

RIIM's third annual public consultation drew a record crowd of over 40 participants, representing a wide spectrum of interested organizations—including all three levels of government, NGOs, advocates, and of course university faculty and graduate students. This year, the Retreat was held in the afternoon, following a Policy Research Symposium (there is a separate report on that portion of the day).

The Retreat was comprised of three panels. The first included representatives from the network of federal agencies that provide funds for RIIM, as well as a senior official of the BC Ministry of Community, Aboriginal, and Women's Services. Next, we heard from a panel of individuals representing the City of Vancouver and the service/advocacy sector. The final panel was devoted to a response from the research coordinators and Co-Directors of RIIM.

In this report, the presentations made in each panel are summarized, providing the foundation for a set of research priorities that will be included in the two calls for proposals that RIIM expects to issue in the coming year. These priorities are summarized in the Appendix to this report, which will also be posted on RIIM's website as a separate document for the use of researchers as they plan for our next Call For Proposals.

Panel 1: Federal and Provincial partners

Chair: Duy Ai Kien, Ottawa Metropolis Project Team

Participants: Chona Iturralde (CIC, Ottawa); John Kent (CIC, Vancouver); Ravi Pendakur (Canadian Heritage); Eden Thompson (HRSDC); Deb Zehr (BC CAWS)

After Duy Ai Kien explained the purpose of the panel (to provide a policy context for RIIM), **Chona Iturralde** presented the four priorities of the Strategic Research and Statistics division of CIC, which are outlined in the department's research plan for 2004-05. They are:

- The economic outcomes of immigration (such as understanding the official language ability of immigrants, immigrants in poverty and the causes of this outcome, and the dynamics of immigrant integration as revealed in the 2001 census and LSIC).
- Support for horizontal policy development initiatives (such as planning of immigration levels and understanding potential sources of immigrants, barriers to

labour market integration, labour market impacts of different levels and composition of immigrants to Canada).

- Targeted research to meet the needs of specific branches, programs or policy priorities of CIC (such as understanding the specific outcomes of refugee settlement, citizenship take-up, foreign students; there is particular interest in seeing researchers explore emerging sources of data: World Value Survey and The Newcomers to Canada, Children and Youth Survey).
- Enhancing administrative databases of CIC to enable research (including new resources of data on citizenship take-up, sponsorship and the transition of individuals in Canada from temporary status to permanent residence and potentially to citizenship, and refugee claimants).

John Kent then outlined the major transformation of CIC that began in December 2003, when the ministry was divided in two new sections, one (which retains the name) dealing with selection and settlement, and the other (the Canadian Border Services Agency) concentrating on the integrity of the immigration program—through border security, deportations, etc. The revised CIC has a somewhat clearer mandate than before, is involved in think strategically about its future direction. There is also a pervasive understanding that CIC will engage with partners in multilateral programming. Above all, CIC must learn to manage a complex set of processes, and accommodate clients with a variety of needs, with limited funds. This will occur at a time when a new cities-based agenda is being framed by Ottawa in consultation with municipal governments. It is likely that this new agenda will intersect with immigration policy, especially in the area of service delivery. Clearly, there are many research needs given the scale of administrative change under way.

Eden Thompson described a similar set of changes, with the old HRDC split into two departments: Social Development, and Human Resources and Skills Development. The former will be mainly concerned with issues related to children and families, people with disabilities, seniors, and volunteerism. The later (HRSDC) is responsible for supporting human capital development, labour market development and establishing a culture of lifelong learning for Canadians. Eden provided a “top ten” list of research needs for the new HRSDC:

- Understanding the causes of declining labour market outcomes for newcomers, despite their increasing level of education
- Identifying best practices in immigrant labour market integration
- There is a need to better understand the link between the supply and demand factors of immigrant labour market integration. (What are the key labour market needs; what do immigrants offer?)
- Do labour market conditions at time of entry have some scarring effects on immigrant economic integration? There is a need to assess the importance of early access to the labour market for the long run economic prospects of immigrants, and the risk of erosion in the value of credentials over time (for those who are not able to employ them soon after landing).
- Learning more about employer perspectives; who do they want to hire?
- Learning more about the credentialization process...which skills acquired abroad are or are not recognized, and why?

- What are the economic impacts of immigration?
- What is the current and future role of temporary migration in the Canadian labour market, and what is its impact on the domestic labour market?
- What are the resulting impacts of the growth in the foreign student population? What role do international students, who are already familiar with Canada's economic and social culture, imply as a source of skills to Canadian employers?
- Understanding the socio-economic situation of the children of immigrants

Eden also encouraged researchers to present their results in ways that attract the attention of policy analysts. She suggested that researchers should be particularly clear in explaining the rationale of their work and that findings should be presented succinctly, preferably with a few key figures that translate technical results into results that are tangible for policy makers or the average person.

Ravi Pendakur began by pointing out that Canadian Heritage supplies a significant proportion of the Metropolis funding base and is eager to see research on a variety of socio-cultural issues (that in some cases go beyond immigration per se). He urged participants to consider using the new Ethnic Diversity Survey, and to think about the construction of ethnicity and identity in Canadian society. Canadian Heritage is also interested in the role of social capital and the impact of social diversity on Canadian society. They also wish to see more research on poverty and exclusion. Ravi ended by describing the process whereby he recently commissioned research on South Asian gangs in Canada, which has led to new policy initiatives in that area.

Finally, **Deb Zehr** spoke about the priorities of CAWS. She began by noting the high degree of overlap between the interests of the federal government and her ministry, and then outlined the institutional context by mentioning the renewal of and changes to the Canada/BC agreement on immigration, and the basic structure of CAWS' integration and immigration divisions. The latter is particularly concerned with: labour market access, international qualification recognition; the impact of the 2010 Olympic Games on the labour market and the role of immigration; and the provincial nominee program and its impacts. It is also interested in regionalization issues and initiated a regional immigration strategy together with CIC last year. Deb noted that RIIM research has had an important impact in this policy area. There are further needs, though, such as research on the nature of welcome in non-metropolitan centres in BC; issues of labour market integration; and international students (especially their potential to contribute to regional development). CAWS is also concerned about settlement in general...the big picture: is the "normal" route to settlement still working?

Panel 2: Local voices

Chair: Marci Bearance

Participants: Chris Friesen (BC-ISS); Kelly Pollack (MOSAIC); Baldwin Wong (City of Vancouver)

Baldwin Wong began the discussion by commenting on the unique role of social planning in the City of Vancouver, the only local municipality to have a department of social planning. He noted that there is a relationship between Vancouver's social diversity and its consistent ranking, internationally, as one of the world's most livable cities. The City of Vancouver is engaged in a number of initiatives related to diversity: it has developed a newcomers' guide to settlement; it has initiated a large study of community perceptions of multiculturalism and participation; it has been developing better access to municipal programs by accommodating a number of language groups; and it has published a new compendium of social indicators. These show the special needs of the working poor in Vancouver. Baldwin highlighted these research priorities for the City:

- The proper role of municipal governments in the settlement process
- Is the level of ethnic segregation rising, and if so is this a problem?
- How can public institutions best reflect the diversity of the communities they serve?
- How can the City develop new outreach strategies that encourage underrepresented groups to participate.

Chris Friesen structured his remarks around a new reference tool that ISS is developing, which will provide a profile of convention refugees in Greater Vancouver. He stressed the lack of systematic knowledge about this population, which grows by about 1000 newcomers per year (plus subsequent family migration, in some cases). He argued that we need to know much more about the integration of refugees in order to better understand out capacity in this sphere of immigration. He illustrated the rapid shifts in source countries that have occurred in recent years, from the Balkan countries a few years ago, to Afghanistan, and more recently Sudan. He also noted that the number of individuals with special needs has been growing rapidly. Most refugees are sent to Vancouver in the fall months...how well is this working out with school entry? We don't really know. Refugees, after being housed at Welcome House when they initially arrive, disperse extensively around metro Vancouver, with the most significant municipal destinations, in order, being Burnaby, Surrey, Vancouver, and Coquitlam. There are important service implications in this pattern. We also know little about the children of refugees. He noted that there is an important opportunity for researchers emerging at the moment: tracing the outcomes of the special settlement arrangements of the Acehnese refugee population in BC (this point was echoed by Marilyn Viger in her final comments of the day). Chris ended by speaking about a new collaborative program of research between ISS and the health board.

Kelly Pollack, Director of Employment Programs at MOSAIC, noted that employment is one of the first, if not *the* first priority of immigrants landing in Canada. There are worrying trends reported in the literature. However, while the literature includes many analyses of barriers faced by immigrants, there are few attempts to find ways to remove them. We know that language fluency is vital, for example, but do we know if we are delivering the best programs for immigrants to acquire language skills? How important is the credentialization issue compared with the changing nature of demand in the labour market? Do we know if the current focus on HRSDC funded job clubs is an effective model for immigrants? There are many gaps in our knowledge base. The key is to develop multidimensional, sustainable labour market programs that will work over the long haul. Research should focus on how to do this.

Jennifer Hyndman delivered a few remarks based on representatives of Collingwood House. They encouraged researchers to take more account of social class in their work on immigrant settlement, and put more effort into understanding the situation of low-income immigrants. In particular, they believe that the popular terms ‘integration’ and ‘adaptation’ do not adequately reflect the complex realities of everyday living. On this note, they would like to see more research documenting the substantial efforts immigrants make to fit in to Vancouver.

Panel 3: RIIM responses

Chair: Eric Bastien (SSHRC)

Participants: Gillian Creese; Dan Hiebert; Jennifer Hyndman; June Beynon

Dan Hiebert started this panel off by thinking about the Retreat in the larger context of RIIM. He noted some positive signals:

- The research initiatives under way by partners of RIIM are impressive and intersect well with what is going on at the centre.
- Almost everyone invited to participate in the Retreat agreed to do so—reflecting goodwill towards the centre.
- Criticisms raised about the ways researchers work with (or, perhaps more accurately, *use*) the community were not voiced this year. This may reflect improved practices on the part of RIIM researchers. Certainly the fact that a larger number of collaborative research efforts are under way may help in this respect.
- It is gratifying to see that so many of the issues raised in the Retreat are, at least in some way, already covered by RIIM research, whether conducted in the recent past or in process now.
- RIIM’s upcoming event on foreign students in Vancouver appears to be well designed to captivate widespread interest, given the many comments about this issue made during the Retreat.
- Finally, it appears that RIIM is offering an important “space” for dialogue across the interested parties in immigration settlement and the centre has assumed a catalytic role in public debate. The Retreat in itself seems to serve this purpose well.

But the Retreat also demonstrates some of the challenges that RIIM ought to take on in the future. Some of these are:

- There are many gaps in RIIM’s research agenda. RIIM research is relevant to policy but does not cover all relevant issues. We need to consider how to act on some of the priorities identified in the Retreat.
- While it is nice to see that RIIM has conducted research in areas highly valued by the groups represented at the Retreat, clearly, more has to be done to disseminate the findings of this research, since many are not familiar with these projects.
- RIIM researchers need to maintain their efforts in documenting “big” processes, such as settlement patterns, labour market participation, inclusion in schools, and public attitudes. This is not easy given the CFP format of the centre.

- Individual RIIM researchers are learning a great deal about immigrant settlement in other countries. It would be helpful to bring this knowledge to the attention of policy analysts in Canada.
- It would also be helpful if RIIM could find ways to respond to immediate research needs, such as those described by Ravi Pendakur on South Asian youth gang activities.

The responses by other panelists have been used to generate a list of RIIM priorities. Rather than summarize their remarks, I have incorporated them in the document appended to this report.

Closing

Marilyn Viger closed the day's proceedings by providing a few final comments. These revolved around the need for *informed* policy decisions, meaning that research is basic to good policy. She stressed the point that no single institution can manage all aspects of immigration and that partnerships are therefore essential in such an important process of nation building. Collaborative initiatives to understand and resolve the problems faced by immigrants are therefore necessary. RIIM has an important role to play in this process.

Appendix: RIIM Research Priorities and Policies, 2004

On July 9th, 2004, RIIM held its annual retreat to consult with the public on research priorities. Participants included policy analysts in government offices, representatives of non-government organizations, immigrant advocates, and researchers from a wide variety of disciplines. This document summarizes the priority issues that were collectively identified. Many of these reflect long-term goals of the centre (and can be seen in last year's report), while others are just emerging. The first three sub-headings itemize topical priorities while the last two raise important issues related to the methods and conduct of collaborative research.

A. Issues related to the migration process

1. What is the current and future role of temporary migration in the Canadian labour market, and what is its impact on the domestic labour market of Greater Vancouver?
2. What are the effects of growth in the international student population? What role do international students, who are already familiar with Canada's economic and social culture, play as a source of skills to Canadian employers? What are the experiences of international students in Canada and are they being well served from a pedagogical point of view?
3. Both the federal and provincial governments see the "regionalization" of immigrant settlement (i.e., into non-metropolitan centres) as a priority. Are non-metropolitan centres sustainable places to settle new immigrants? Which ones? How do we know?

B. Issues related to economic integration

4. What are the broad economic impacts of immigration?
5. What are the causes of declining labour market outcomes for newcomers (despite their increasing level of education)?
6. What are the links between the supply and demand factors of immigrant labour market integration? That is, what are the key labour market needs, and what do immigrants offer? Also, what are the best regulatory practices in immigrant labour market integration?
7. What are the employment barriers facing immigrants? How is the process of credential recognition working? What are best practices in this area? Specific case studies, such as re-credentialization in the teaching professions, would be welcome.
8. Do labour market conditions at the time of entry have "scarring effect" on subsequent immigrant economic integration? If qualifications are ignored, or jobs are unavailable, shortly after landing, is the value of credentials eroded?
9. What are employer perspectives on immigrants; who do they want to hire?
10. What obstacles are immigrants, especially those with low incomes, facing in the housing market?
11. Is the level of spatial segregation in the city rising? Is there an emerging confluence of poverty and immigrants?

C. Issues related to social, educational and political participation, and citizenship

12. What are the challenges inhibiting the educational, social and political participation of immigrants? How can participation be fostered, especially for small or marginalized groups.
13. How is belonging (or not belonging) experienced? What policies can facilitate belonging (in terms of concrete practices and subjectivity)? What makes a welcoming community? What are the roles of different levels of government (federal, provincial and municipal and school district) in fostering belonging?
14. How is social capital related to issues of integration? How do social networks and perceptions of trust vary among different ethnocultural communities, and within cities and towns of different sizes?
15. How are recent changes in government organization and policies affecting the delivery of services to immigrants and refugees? Are immigrants getting access to the most useful kinds of services? How are changes in government programs affecting the settlement organizations and staff who provide these services?
16. How do identity, values and attitudes vary across generations within immigrant communities? Are the children of immigrants fully participating in Canadian classrooms, schools and communities?
17. Classrooms and schools are microcosms of civic, cultural, and linguistic participation. What practices should teachers and principals take in activating this participation?
18. How can diverse *languages* and *cultures* best be included in classrooms and schools? This research should focus on the full range of Francophone/French immersion/and Anglophone classrooms and schools.
19. How are policies such as multiculturalism experienced on the ground, especially at the neighbourhood scale? What forms of conflict and collaboration are evident at this level?

D. Methods and resources

The following types of research are deemed especially important. Research that :

- compares and evaluates practices in different jurisdictions.
- uses new sources of information, including the Immigration Database (IMDB), the Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS), and the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC).
- reveals links between theory, policies, and practices (i.e., programs and regulations).
- evaluates the effectiveness of programs.
- analyzes the experiences and perceptions of service deliverers (e.g. teachers, and settlement workers) as well as individual clients and families for whom the services are designed.

E. Research conduct

It is expected that many of the proposals for Metropolis research will involve partnerships, either with government agencies, NGOs, or others. Proposals demonstrating active and responsible partnerships will be given priority. The following features are important:

- Partnerships should “begin at the beginning” of the research process, when issues and approaches are first outlined. Partners should be involved throughout all of the other steps of the research process as well.
- Partners should be fully acknowledged in all outputs derived from research.
- Results should be fully shared with partners, as well as the subjects of research.

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