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MBC RESEARCH CONSULTATION RETREAT:

Summary of Proceedings

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MBC RESEARCH CONSULTATION RETREAT

September 26, 2008, SFU Harbour Centre

Introduction

The seventh annual research retreat was attended by at least 42 participants, including representatives of all levels of government, non-governmental organizations, and academic researchers. The retreat was organized with two thematically-based discussion panels in the morning, with domain discussions and a final summary discussion in the afternoon. The first panel focused on policy and practical initiatives at the local level, and the second on policy initiatives and research needs at the Federal-Provincial level. Presenters in the panels were given 15 minutes each, followed by general discussion.

The day began with a welcome and statement from **Daniel Hiebert** and **Krishna Pendakur**, the Metropolis BC Co-Directors, as well as **Barry Halliday** and **Luisa Wang** from the Metropolis Secretariat.

Welcome and Statement by Co-Directors

Twenty-four research grants were awarded in the last two years, including the first grant in the justice, policing, and security domain. In an effort to facilitate the ability of policy makers and practitioners to use the research findings, grant holders are now required to submit both a working paper *and* a one-page policy briefing note that provides an overview of the research question(s) and key findings. The intention of these briefing notes is to enable those without specific expertise to access the findings; as such feedback on their effectiveness is crucial.

The last year has been prolific year for Metropolis BC researchers, with the production of 10 books, 36 additional chapters, 62 academic journal articles and 49 other publications (e.g. working papers). In addition to written dissemination researchers have presented at conferences, including both National and International Metropolis Conferences, and at various research symposia. To date, four symposia have been held or are in process of being planned for this funding cycle. These included symposia on Multiculturalism (Nov. 2007) and Regional Distribution and Settlement (held in Kelowna in May 2008), as well as upcoming symposia on Refugee Settlement and Integration (Nov. 7, 2008) and Economic and Labour Market Integration (May 11-12, 2009). Attendees were invited to participate in the upcoming National Metropolis Conference to be held Calgary in March 2009.

Consideration of future research directions is critical at this juncture. Increased municipal involvement in immigration related issues, organizational shifts in both the NGO community and provincial government, the introduction of new program delivery models (e.g. SWIS), and Federal policy changes (e.g., Bill C50 and the Canadian Experience Class) are rapidly transforming our immigration and integration landscape. The retreat serves two goals: first, at a general level, to consider how best to connect all of these changes with research, and second to inform future calls for proposals. Over the coming months Metropolis BC will be launching two calls for proposals: one for dissemination projects to increase the 'use value' of our research and the second for research projects. Unlike other research grants, dissemination grants are open to all affiliates. Results from the retreat will be used to inform future research calls and ensure the calls reflect existing needs.

Statement from Metropolis Secretariat, Barry Halliday and Luisa Wang

Barry Halliday and Luisa Wang outlined a number of changes that have occurred within the Metropolis Secretariat over the preceding year. Luisa Wang has taken over from Barry Halliday as the Metropolis BC liaison, while Barry Halliday is now responsible for International Metropolis liaison.

Panel 1: The local scene: Policy and practical initiatives arising in municipal governments and the non-profit sector, including research needs

Chair: Krishna Pendakur, Co-Director, Metropolis BC

Participants: Eyob Naizghi (MOSAIC), Tung Chan (SUCCESS), Baldwin Wong (City of Vancouver), Aileen Murphy (City of Surrey)

Eyob Naizghi began by speaking about local perspectives on the significant changes that are occurring in Canadian immigration policy, including the continuing shift towards more economic migrants in response to the demands of corporate Canada. Concurrently we see declining English language proficiency in spite of higher skills, increasing poverty amongst newcomers, and an increase in ‘multi-barriered’ or ‘high-needs’ government-assisted refugees (GARs) following the 2002 implementation of the Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA). In British Columbia, the last year has seen a rapid rise in the numbers of temporary foreign workers who come at different skill levels (from agricultural to high-tech), such that the number of temporary foreign workers arriving in BC in 2007 came close to the number of permanent arrivals to BC.

A number of major changes have transformed the provision of settlement services to immigrants and refugees in BC over the last year:

1. There has been a significant enhancement in resources available to immigrants and refugees in BC;
2. Resources for the provision of settlement services and programs have been provided to both immigrant and refugee serving agencies, as well as non-traditional service providers (e.g., school districts, public libraries);
3. Municipalities are getting more involved in the delivery of services to outlying areas and smaller communities;
4. New resources have facilitated innovation in the provision of settlement services. Consequently, there has been a shift from the traditional general service delivery model, which does not differentiate if the client is a child or a senior, to the provision of services geared toward more specific groups (e.g., the Step Ahead project to provide enhanced support to ‘multi-barriered’ GARs), and finally;
5. The NGO sector has changed its approach to a more corporate model based on consortiums as opposed to loose partnerships.

Each of these changes requires careful evaluation in order to better understand their implications.

With respect to research priorities, Eyob emphasized the need to:

- Assess the implementation of the consortium model within the non-profit sector to better understand the implications of these changes (e.g., associated risks, outcomes);
- Demographically, there is a need for more attention to seniors and youth;
- Examine the consistency between policy and programming for multi-barriered clients (e.g., are

multi-barriered clients receiving adequate support and services? What are the implications of transportation loans?);

- Examine the experiences of temporary foreign workers (e.g., how, if at all, are they benefitting? How are they being treated?) and consider whether or not the shift towards temporary, as opposed to permanent, migration is the best way of building a nation;
- What are the impacts of expanded support and the shifting landscape of service provision: how standardized do services need to be? How equal and how accessible are the services being delivered from different locations?

Tung Chan began by discussing what has changed within SUCCESS before addressing future research needs. SUCCESS has moved beyond an ethno-specific service organization both geographically (e.g., with the introduction of offices in Taipei and Seoul so as to provide services pre-arrival) and with respect to the scope of services (e.g., with the inclusion of services for First Nations people and homeless persons in the Downtown Eastside). Increasing diversity amongst the clientele has necessitated more diversified staffing, language programming, etc. The emphasis on immigration as a two-way process has expanded the emphasis beyond immigrants to include the wider Canadian population; 8% of SUCCESS clients now identify as Canadian. Programmatic changes include the introduction of employment services to work with disabled individuals (whether new immigrant or established Canadian), opening another assisted living facility, and establishing a hotline that is available from 10am to 10pm to provide Mandarin and Cantonese speaking persons somewhere for help if they wish to remain anonymous.

Future research needs:

- There is a need for research that examines the effectiveness of existing services. While the primary audience of researchers is policy makers, practitioners need more than policy briefs. Rather, there is a demand to know if existing services are effective. Can they be streamlined? Are there best practices? Alternative models for service delivery? What can service providing agencies do better? For example, how does the CANN service at the airport – which services approximately one million people per year – impact New Canadians?
- There is a need for longitudinal research within assisted living facilities to assess the extent to which attitudinal changes occur, if at all, as a result of living side by side with new immigrants and those of European background.
- What is the impact of pre-arrival information delivery on new immigrants? For example, longitudinal research on those who have and have not received pre-arrival information to whether these services have an impact on integration.
- Immigrant regionalization as a strategy for nation building and increased tolerance (e.g., Fort St. John).
- Research on temporary foreign workers.
- International Students: Examine the outcomes of those who stayed as a result of the 1974 amnesty for international students to use as a framework for policy makers to see if this is something that should be repeated. How does that inform us when we are looking at the new temporary foreign worker policy? At the new Canadian Experience Class?
- Examine the experiences of business immigrants both with respect to their own experiences (e.g. in obtaining employment, credential recognition, etc) as well as research on how to aid Canadian business people so they can connect with them better. How do we best connect entrepreneurs who come with extensive networks of contacts (e.g., in Mainland China) with local business people?
- Dissemination projects to aid in accessing and using research.

Baldwin Wong began his discussion by speaking about the key areas of concern for the City of Vancouver, including the need to facilitate access to information and programs for newcomers, and promote social, cultural and political engagement. Although the upcoming municipal elections will influence the ability and direction of City of Vancouver efforts, the Mayor's Task force on Immigration continues to function. A number of organizational changes have occurred including the merging of social planning into Social Policy and Development. Recent polling undertaken by the City reveals that concern about social issues continues to be a major issue among Vancouverites, and remains a focus for Social Policy and Development. Increased inter-governmental liaison is a positive development which has the potential to give greater voice in Federal and Provincial policy development. Further, there has been increased communication with cities outside Metro Vancouver to learn better practices. An upcoming summit conference on Immigrant Employment Issues, for example, will bring policy makers and employers to the table to learn how to move forward on economic integration and labour force participation. Metropolis BC research can inform this process by identifying areas requiring better understanding, as well as emerging issues.

Recently, however, the City of Vancouver has come under pressure from NGOs seeking the necessary funding to replace aging infrastructure or expand spaces they occupy to provide services to immigrants and the public. The City of Vancouver has limited capacity to support in these requests, so there is a need to work with other levels of government to fulfill these expanding needs.

With respect to research priorities, in no particular order, the City would like to see research on:

- Housing and other social issues: In particular, there is a desire to come up with a way to see the intersection of population groups (e.g., immigrants, seniors, youth) and their issues (e.g., housing, economic, social, cultural needs), to develop a composite index of vulnerabilities. How can these complex issues best be conveyed to policy makers?
- Data collection is challenging for municipal governments. Although municipalities have access to a variety of data sources, they often provide different information. How to better align levels of information to ensure policy makers have the right source of information?
- Attraction and retention of newcomers: Although we continue to witness suburbanization and dispersal of immigrants outside the City of Vancouver, Vancouver is still experiencing steady job growth. Research is needed that examines where people settle and how they are accessing jobs, as well as their reasons for leaving.
- What are the impacts of policy downloading on the capacity of municipalities to provide services?

Aileen Murphy began by outlining the social and demographic changes occurring in the City of Surrey and how the City is responding to them. Social issues (e.g. housing and homelessness, children and youth, immigration) continue to be high on the political agenda. British Columbia's second largest city has a young and ethnically diverse population, with 46% of the population identifying as visible minorities in the 2006 Census. The overall lack of infrastructure and the low per capita dollars invested in services have meant that the City of Surrey is experiencing challenges in meeting current population needs. Thirty-eight per cent of Surrey residents are immigrants, with 30,000 of them having arrived within the last five years. Over 40% of the South Asian community in Surrey is recent immigrants from India. Approximately one-third of the city is agricultural land, meaning a large population of agricultural temporary foreign workers and the challenges of housing them. Further, Surrey is increasingly becoming one of the primary destinations for refugee settlement in Metro Vancouver; one-quarter of refugees arriving in Metro

Vancouver in 2007 settled there. The adoption of the Social Plan in 2006, which identified diversity issues as one of the five areas requiring consideration, and the multicultural advisory committee in 2007, speak to the active efforts of the City of Surrey in responding to changing population needs. Further, concerns about whether we are supporting refugees, and in particular refugee youth, in a way that they will have a future in this country have come to the fore owing to increased visibility within particular neighborhoods and the community more broadly. Recently the City applied for, and received, funding from the Ministry of Housing and Social Development (MHSD) to undertake research on the housing experiences of refugees. The introduction of the Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces initiative has prompted Surrey politicians to bring together stakeholders to consider how to make Surrey a more welcoming place.

Research of interest to the City of Surrey includes:

- Knowledge transfer is a key need for the City of Surrey, particularly given the small planning department. In particular there is a need for quick and easily accessible information for those who do not have the time to wade through research reports (e.g. fact sheets, reports for latest findings, information-sharing)
- Local research to support place-based social policy
- Information on refugees, particularly refugee youth (e.g., best practices? How can the community support them?)
- Research on areas of local government responsibility (e.g., built form, immigrants and housing, appropriate housing for different households, library services and parks). How can these be made more accessible?
- The need to develop indicators to assess the effectiveness of existing services and programs.

Following the presentations the floor was opened for discussion. Concerns raised in the course of discussion highlighted three key themes. First, there is an ongoing need to encourage more dialogue between academics and NGOs in order to generate research together. This is made more difficult within the NGO community by the lack of availability of time and the need for information on best practices, and research with the goal toward program development. Second, there is a need to ensure information, data and research outcomes are easily accessible so as to enable quick response to requests for information (e.g., media) and assess the effectiveness of existing programs and services. Third, participants reiterated the need for education geared towards changing the attitude of employers and encouraging them to accept credentials and life skills.

Panel 2: The federal / provincial government scene: Policy initiatives and research needs

Chair: Daniel Hiebert, Co-Director, Metropolis BC

Participants: Fernando Mata (Canadian Heritage), Lois Reimer (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, BC-Yukon), Deb Zehr (Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development), Lucy Swib (Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development).

In his presentation, **Fernando Mata** emphasized that the focus of Canadian Heritage is on all Canadians, whether recent, established or Canadian born. Drawing on research undertaken by Will Kymlicka, Mata asserted that the political integration of newcomers in Canada continues to be excellent compared with other OECD countries, as are the results for education of the second generation. Kymlicka argues that Canada is not like Europe, where anti-immigrant sentiments are rampant, and that the results continue to be positive. Kymlicka identified ten future research themes on multiculturalism in Canada:

- Adapting multiculturalism for religious diversity;
- Racism and discrimination;
- Labour market integration;
- Immigration beyond the metropolis;
- Implications for multiculturalism related to the current concern over security issues;
- The future of multiculturalism (e.g., pluralism);
- Relating multiculturalism to Aboriginal peoples, particularly within the Prairies;
- Multiculturalism and vulnerable groups (e.g., women, youth, second generation);
- Patterns of ethnic community formation (e.g., institutional completeness, community mapping) with institutions, as opposed to individuals, as the unit of analysis; and
- Multicultural readiness in service delivery (e.g., are institutions responding to religious diversity)

Research themes identified specifically in British Columbia include:

- Economic participation and life style issues (e.g., consumer preferences);
- Multiculturalism in social services;
- Youth at risk: multiculturalism, education and violence prevention;
- The implications of international geopolitics and domestic responses on multiculturalism;
- Racism and discrimination: implementation of Canada's Action Plan Against Racism;
- Engagement with the 2010 Olympic Games (e.g. how are ethnic minorities and the wider Vancouver community involved in the Games? Given that athletes are role models for today's youth there is a need to see diversity in athletes. How will the Olympic community promote different role models?); and
- Issues of professional accreditation and their impact on the school trajectories of children (i.e., those whose parents experience downward mobility).

After providing an overview of the CIC Regional Office for BC/Yukon, with respect to the institutional structure as well as the current immigration annex negotiations, **Lois Reimer** spoke of the size and composition of immigration flows to British Columbia. Important population changes in British Columbia in 2007 included the arrival of much larger flows of temporary foreign workers (which increased 79% in 2007) and the shift towards group processing of government-assisted refugees (e.g. Bhutanese) which promises more efficient resettlement of groups from the same camp so as to assist resettlement.

Drawing upon Minister Findley's April 2008 'Vision Speech on Canada's 21st Century Immigration Program.' Lois identified a number of changes and challenges:

- The increasing dependence of labour force growth upon immigration;
- Increasing competition from countries such as New Zealand who are capitalizing upon Canada's backlog;
- A shift away from the concept of 'first apply, first processed' under Bill C50;
- The rising importance of security and safety for Canada ;
- The need to work closer with provinces to overcome regional differences in skilled worker requirements;
- Attempts to foster a closer working relationship with HRSDC;
- Development of expedited occupation lists for temporary foreign workers;
- Improving and expanding options for international students (e.g., enabling off-campus employment, post-graduate employment);
- The provision of pre-arrival orientation and counseling is a priority to prepare people before they get to Canada (e.g. credentials, what to expect in the labour market); and
- Creating programs for temporary foreign workers that intentionally blur the lines between temporary foreign workers and permanent settlement (e.g. Canadian Experience Class);

Labour market demands in British Columbia remain diverse, with demands for both low- and high-skilled labourers which require the development of supportive frameworks and working groups with federal and provincial partners to meet employers' needs. Challenges facing BC include the need for an examination of what is happening within the employer sphere, continuing pressure from sectors to extend permanent programs to low-skilled workers (e.g., demands from the tourism sector), and processing challenges. Recent changes include the implementation of Bill C50, which enables the minister to issue instructions with respect to certain occupations within the skilled migration stream and monitor applications, and the introduction of the Canadian Experience Class.

Finally, Lois identified key research interests:

- Continuing concern with the economic outcomes of permanent and temporary migrants: How do they fare compared with the Canadian born? What are the implications of settlement services on integration? Rising poverty among immigrants in Vancouver and Toronto continues to be a concern, prompting questions around how, if at all, they emerge from poverty (upward mobility).
- Interest in the social aspects of integration, including measures that assess the rate and level of integration; language acquisition; influence of social capital and how it affects integration.
- Research on employers. How are they dealing with new arrivals in terms of acculturating them to the workplace?
- Canadian perceptions of temporary foreign workers. Do Canadians see it as a guest worker program? Do Canadians see it as a 'win-win' program – good for Canada, good for the workers?

Deb Zehr began by speaking about recent reorganization within the Provincial Government that changes the context for immigration policy and program development. Immigrant and settlement moved from the Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG) to the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development (ALMD). On the settlement side this includes responsibility for settlement services, ELSA, rolling out of expanded funding, responsibility for Welcome BC, BCSAP and stakeholder relations. The Anti-Racism and Multiculturalism Unit has remained with the Ministry of the Attorney General, under the direction of Meharoona Ghani. The shift of Immigrant Settlement (IS) and Immigration Policy and

Initiatives (IPI) into ALMD is part of a larger reorganization that brings together other aspects of employment, including Work BC, Labour market initiatives, and international recruitment (e.g. the Provincial Nominee Program), as well as a stronger priority on development of labour market information (including forecasting trends). There is an acknowledgement of the need to examine BC's labour market and the skills shortage: BC skills shortage has the potential to limit economic growth of specific industries and the provincial economy. Immigration has been recognized as a critical component of the labour market, but the labour market is also a part of immigration. Ensuring BC provides what is needed to maximize the economic and social and political benefits of immigration is critical.

Key questions and policy research priorities with respect to the economic side for British Columbia include:

- In a time of labour market shortages, there are fewer permanent migrants. Even if the number was the same, would it be enough? Is BC in the right position for an increase in temporary foreign workers? Is the increase in temporary foreign workers planned or is it a reaction to an environment that is pushing the policies (e.g., is it a way to allow employers to respond quickly? Do they meet the intention of the program?). What does this mean for immigration and the roles of immigrant selection?
- The Provincial Nominee tool is increasingly required to meet the need for economic demands, but is this the best way to bring people in? What are the implications for Federal policy and selection? Are we building an immigration system that is responsive to labour market demands and employers, or are we building a nation, or are they the same, or not?
- There is a need to examine macro questions about the future of immigration and the governance of provinces and territories who are working with federal government on immigration. What is the relationship between Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments and where will it be in a few years?
- Given the increase in low skilled workers, are we doing justice to the individuals? To families? To the source countries?
- What is the appropriate balance between temporary and permanent migrants?
- We should consider the eligibility of temporary residents for settlement services. What are the implications of providing services to temporary migrants who may become permanent?
- Regional immigration is a priority: what are the implications for access to labour markets?
- Government is data rich (e.g. surveys, databases). Are we using these resources in the best way? Over the years a system has developed so that some have access to the data, but may not necessarily have the expertise to use it effectively (e.g. IMDB, LIDS). As such, there is a need to maximize partnerships.

Before speaking about the changes in the delivery of settlement services that have occurred over the past year and identifying future research needs, **Lucy Swib** encouraged participants to examine the *Welcome BC Year in Review*, which focuses on all initiatives of the branch over the last year under the Welcome BC banner. The repositioning of the ministry has provided the opportunity to have a more coordinated and strategic approach; further, the continued co-location with the Anti-Racism and Multiculturalism Unit is advantageous in the development and continued unfolding of Welcome BC and Welcoming and the Inclusive Communities and Workplaces initiative (WICWP).

Welcome BC was introduced in 2007 to unite settlement services under one umbrella. The combination of Federal and provincial funding has enabled the province to expand services. The six key goals of Welcome BC include strategically working with other ministries:

- Build a stronger foundation for immigrant success;
- Address barriers to successful adaptation for the most vulnerable immigrants;
- Improve labour market access for new immigrants;
- Strengthen community capacity;
- Foster a bright future for immigrant youth and their families; and
- Support Welcoming and Inclusive Communities

The broad goals of Welcome BC have enabled the Ministry to merge settlement and multiculturalism. The premise of WICWP is that successful integration is the key to social cohesion, and successful integration requires welcoming and inclusive communities and workplaces. Although communities play a key role in promoting cultural diversity, and addressing discrimination and racism, community capacity varies significantly across the province in terms of the way they can support and include immigrants. More resources exist within places like Vancouver and Surrey; however the movement of immigrants outside these areas necessitates examination of the dynamics both inside and outside Metro Vancouver. Further, the research strategy associated with WICWP is working toward:

- Examining elements of community programming,
- Expanding public education and dissemination projects, as well as
- Facilitating Ministry-led initiatives (e.g. Forum for Mayors and Municipalities) to exchange ideas on welcoming and inclusive communities,

Significantly there is a need to identify promising practices, and defining indicators of what makes a welcoming and inclusive community. The research sub-committee of WICWP is close to establishing a framework for looking at welcoming and inclusive communities, and will identify priorities and select research that will inform provincial and local communities.

Following the panel presentations **Meharoon Ghani**, Director of the Anti-Racism and Multiculturalism Unit, was invited to speak about the recent ministry changes. Her key message is that the reorganization that created Anti-Racism and Multiculturalism as a separate unit is an excellent opportunity to explore multiculturalism in a more concrete and focused way. The Anti-Racism and Multiculturalism lens is crucial especially in the context of immigration and settlement, as well as for looking at all Canadians.

