



# METROPOLIS BRITISH COLUMBIA

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### **Regionalization BC 2008:**

***Regionalization and Rural Immigration in  
British Columbia***

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# **Metropolis British Columbia**

## ***Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Diversity***

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## Working Paper Series

### **REGIONALIZATION BC 2008: REGIONALIZATION AND RURAL IMMIGRATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

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## SECTION 1 - LITERATURE REVIEW

### *1.1 Context and Change*

**I**n 2006, immigrants constituted 19.8 percent of Canada's population (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2007). By 2011, immigrants will account for all net labour force growth, and by 2026, all net population increase (Bollman, Beshiri, and Clemenson 2007; Metropolis 2003). The importance of immigration, valued by sheer numbers, presents itself clearly in the composition of this country. Crucial to the nation's growth, immigration helps define and distinguish Canadian culture, supports the health of the economy, and comprises the better part of population increase in Canada each year. With its yearly target of establishing immigration levels at approximately 1 percent of the total population, the Canadian government has recognized the long-term benefits of accepting newcomers. As such, we are obliged to consider how the benefits of immigration are spread across the diversity of Canadian lives and landscapes.

The overall goal of this project is to develop a better understanding of the complexity of regionalization in British Columbia (BC) and to develop recommendations and opportunities for community-based solutions to attract and retain immigrants. The following section is a literature review describing the factors underlying immigrant decisions about destination, settlement and leaving rural regions or small towns.

Due to migration (both forced and voluntary), something quite remarkable is happening to cities, towns, and regions within Canada. New geographies are being created within and between cities, which presents a challenge to the ways in which we understand settlement and integration experiences.

The social geographies of service provision and social networks are key areas of inquiry into new Canadian settlement geographies.

Two concurrent trends of recent immigration characterize the ever-changing face of Canada's population: the increasingly globalized composition of immigrants and their continued uneven geographic settlement in Canada's three major metropolitan areas, Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver (Papillon 2002; Bourne and Rose 2001). The urban concentration of immigrants has accelerated the changing social geographies of these fast-growing cities. By comparison, the remainder of Canada seems lightly touched by immigration, though, as Halliday (2006, 89) suggests, we must not "discount the importance of relatively small numbers in relatively small places." New data examined by Beshiri and He (2009, 1) indicate that in Canada's rural and small-town areas in 2006, immigrants accounted for 5.3 percent of the population, numbering 312,555 individuals.

BC received 20.2 percent of the immigrants arriving in Canada between 1991 and 2001, 87.6 percent of which moved to the Greater Vancouver Regional District (Metropolis 2003). Immigrant settlement patterns in BC help to polarize the demographic, economic, and cultural differences between the metropolitan area of Vancouver and less populated centres in the rest of the province.

Macro-level demographic trends have a significant impact on the day-to-day lives of all Canadian residents, and certainly on immigrants themselves. The tendency of newcomers to settle in metropolitan centres is reflected in the wide extent of research that focuses on immigration to Vancouver, Montréal and Toronto (Hathiyani 2007; Huynh 2004; Hiebert and Ley 2001). In contrast, immigration to small and medium centres remains understudied, though

over the last five years, the topic has garnered considerable attention. The following is a review of the recent literature on immigrant settlement, dispersal and regionalization policies in Canada, with a focus on BC.

### *1.2 Uneven geographies*

According to the 2001 census, about 74 percent of all immigrants who arrived in Canada during the 1990s settled in Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver (Statistics Canada 2003b). In 2006, immigrants in Vancouver accounted for just under 40 percent of the entire metropolitan population, surpassed only by Toronto at 45.7 percent, and followed by Montréal at a distant 20.6 percent (Hiebert 2009, 7). Why do immigrants choose to settle in Canada's three largest cities? There are several answers to this question, and each of them offers insight into the challenges faced by immigrants who settle in non-metropolitan regions.

People come into Canada through a variety of migratory classes, both temporary and permanent, and place of settlement is determined differently by each class of migrants. International migration is selective and requires those who have moved to overcome both physical and social barriers. It also requires migrants to adhere to government immigration policies (Li 2003). To understand the trends in settlement of immigrants, one must first observe the immigration system. Temporary student visa holders or seasonal workers are normally committed to an institution or employer in one place. Immigrants are admitted into Canada under different legal categories as defined by immigration regulations and statutes. Although definitions may change, on occasion, three main categories are clear: family class; independent or economic class; and refugees.

### *1.2.1 Family Class*

The number of people who could be included in the family class category has varied over the years. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2005b), the family class is defined today as “[p]ermanent residents sponsored by a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident living in Canada who is 18 years of age or over. Family class immigrants include spouses and partners; parents and grandparents; and others” (108).

Migrants entering through family reunification settle initially with the family members that sponsored them. A study by Statistics Canada found that the most important reason for choosing a particular location to settle included the presence of family or friends (Statistics Canada 2003b). According to Telegdi (2006), the presence of family in Canada—rather than language skills, services available, or work experience— is the most significant indicator of an immigrant’s potential for successful and permanent settlement. Family reunification serves the purpose of enabling the successful settlement of new immigrants and enhancing the quality of life of new Canadians by providing them with an extended family support network (Telegdi 2006).

### *1.2.2 Refugee*

As part of international humanitarian commitments, 10,000 or more refugee immigrants come to Canada each year (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2005a). Several subcategories within the refugee category exist. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2005b), refugees are defined as “[p]ermanent residents in the refugee category, [which] include government-assisted refugees, privately sponsored refugees, refugees landed in Canada and refugee dependants (i.e., dependants or refugees landed in Canada), including spouses and partners living abroad or in Canada” (110).

Refugees quickly change their residence after arrival, compared to family and economic class immigrants (Houle 2007). One explanation for the high migration rates of refugees is the size of the community where they were originally sent (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2001). Most refugees and asylum seekers do not choose their initial place of landing in Canada because they must first settle in the community inhabited by their sponsors (Statistics Canada 2003). Other groups of refugees, however, are often directed to a city that can provide the necessary settlement services (Bauder and Sharpe 2002).

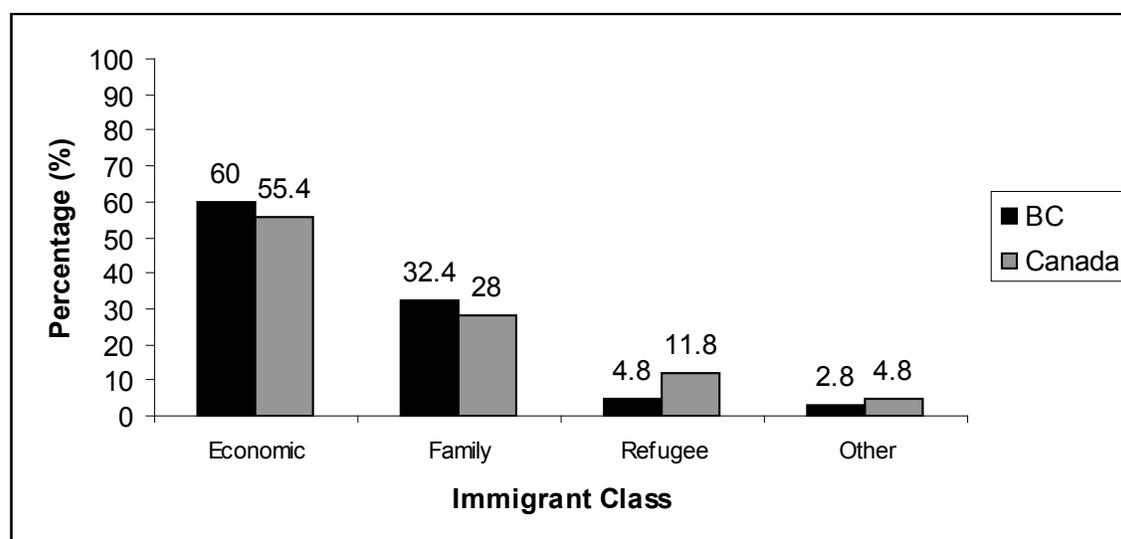
### *1.2.3 Economic Class*

While Canada has paid close attention to the humanitarian objectives of family reunification and refugee settlement, in recent years the balance in the annual immigration targets has moved towards the economic class (Ley and Hiebert 2001). According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2005b), economic class immigrants are defined as “[p]ermanent residents selected for their skills and ability to contribute to Canada’s economy. The economic category includes skilled workers, business immigrants, provincial or territorial nominees, and live-in caregivers” (107).

Newbold (2007) indicates that settlement patterns and secondary migration is likely to vary with respect to immigrant type (refugees, economic class, or family class). The economic class arguably has the most choice when selecting a city in which to settle; however, several determining factors may affect this decision. For example, Newbold (2007) found that relocation is more likely if economic class immigrants are presented with new employment opportunities.

In 2007, 38,941 new immigrants arrived in BC (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2008). Based on the data from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2008), the most common immigrant group arriving in BC has come through the economic class, largely as skilled workers, investors, and provincial nominees. They accounted for 60 percent of the new immigrants in BC in 2007, a number significantly higher than their 55.4 percent share of new immigration to all of Canada. The second most common classification was family class, constituting 32.4 percent of new immigrants in BC, again slightly higher than the national average of 28 percent (Figure 1).

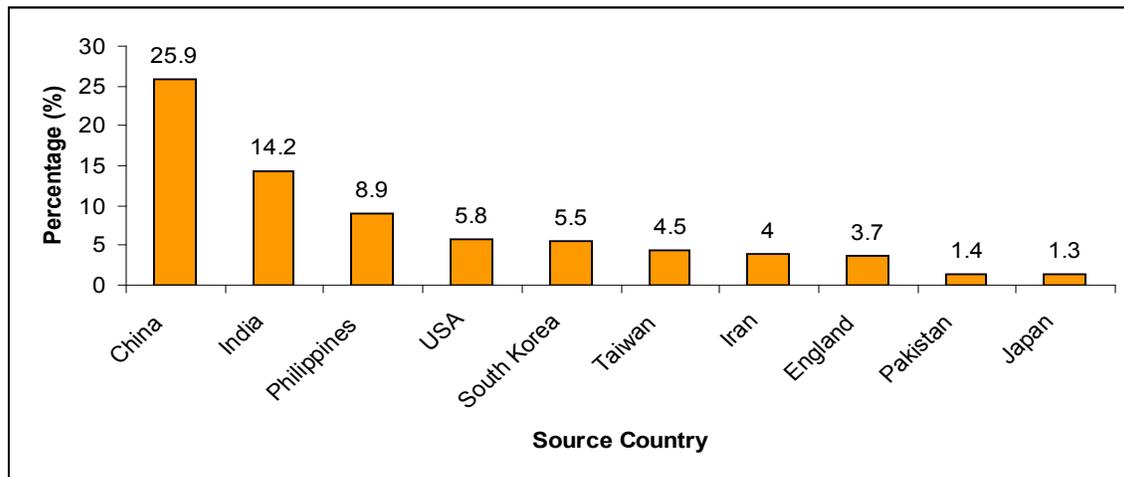
FIGURE 1: IMMIGRANT LANDINGS BY CLASS IN BC IN 2007



Source: (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2008)

Based on data from BC Stats (2007), immigrants that arrived in BC between January and December 2006 came from a number of source countries. The most common countries of origin included: China (25.9 percent), India (14.2 percent), Philippines (8.9 percent), USA (5.8 percent), South Korea (5.5 percent), Taiwan (4.5 percent), Iran (4.0 percent), England (3.7 percent), Pakistan (1.4 percent), and Japan (1.3 percent) (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2: BC IMMIGRANT LANDINGS BY SOURCE COUNTRY IN 2006



Source: (BC Stats 2007)

#### 1.2.4 Settlement factors

A review of recent literature indicates that the most frequently cited factors encouraging settlement in major centres are:

**The size and health of the labour market.** Immigrants consider the availability of work in the field of employment in which they have skills. Reitz (2001) convincingly demonstrates that the majority of migrants entering through Canada's economic class are skilled and possess a level of education slightly above the average Canadian adult. Most professional and service sector employment is concentrated in Canada's largest cities, while non-metropolitan regions offer a smaller pool of appropriate job opportunities. In rural non-metro-adjacent regions, one-quarter of the new immigrants are working in primary-sector occupations (Beshiri 2004, 16). Smaller centres, however, have unique employment contexts. Some communities suffer from domestic out-migration and underemployment, while others (such as Fort St. John) are experiencing unassailable growth and major labour shortages. The mismatch

between professional training and the kind of jobs available is unfortunately still an issue of major concern for the government and immigrants alike.

**The presence of rooted social networks.** Family, friends or pre-existing linguistic or ethno-cultural communities help to lower the costs and risks of movement for new migrants, making it easier to find a place to live, employment, and a community in which to find support (Massey 1990; Taylor and Thrift 1986).

**Self-sustaining networks. Networks sustain themselves, and each act of migration alters the social context within which subsequent migration decisions are made** (Massey et al. 1993). Linguistic enclaves, the availability of cheap ethnic goods, and foreign-language media (Chiswick and Miller 2000) form the glue that prevents dispersion in Canada (DeVoretz 2003). Ram and Shin (1999) suggest that "some immigrants may not see the need for assimilation into mainstream Canadian society as their ethnic enclaves provide them with social and economic security" (162). Congregational association characterized by in-group interaction is critical to identity formation and maintenance for all cultural groups and is not unique to immigrant or ethnic groups (Ley 2003; Hiebert and Ley 2001; Ray 1999).

**The quality of life and livelihood.** Moving to a big city guarantees a wider array of schools, medical centres, public transport, cultural activities and social services. Moving to a smaller centre limits those choices. Quality of life can also include the tolerance of the receiving society. According to Peake and Ray (2001), concentrated immigration has led to the highly urban character of the distribution of people of colour, and therefore sensitivity to racism and the normalization of "mainstream" society is not part of the everyday lives

of many Canadians in smaller centres. Quality of life, however, is a highly idiosyncratic and qualified measurement.

**Accessibility of infrastructure, administration and information.**

Because of transportation networks, immigrants are most likely to arrive in major urban centres that have international airports. Similarly, the location of processing centres or embassies (both in the home country and in Canada) can affect the choice of where to settle. Information accessibility can help break down any misconceived stereotypes about place; for example, the quality and clarity of a promotional website or pamphlets/educational sessions can direct immigrants to certain regions. The availability of language training is another key factor. These themes will crop up at a later point in this report.

## SECTION 2 - REGIONAL INSIGHT

### *2.1 Government and policy*

The following section provides an understanding of regionalization, transnationalism, the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP), and some key factors influencing immigrant recruitment and retention in rural and small towns. Immigrants select a place to settle based on several factors, such as a warm and welcoming community, immigrant services provided by the community, and educational, cultural and economic opportunities (Citizenship and Immigration Canada et al. 2003). Most choose to settle in Toronto, Montréal or Vancouver (Beshiri and Alfred 2002). The Canadian federal and provincial governments have expressed increasing concern with uneven settlement patterns. This concern is founded on two perceived challenges: the assumption that metropolitan areas cannot manage rapid and ethno-linguistically diverse population growth, and the fear that smaller centres cannot survive without population growth and skilled workers (Walton-Roberts 2005). Citizenship and

Immigration Canada (2001) has developed new strategies for achieving a “more balanced geographic distribution of immigrants” and refugee settlement to small cities, towns, and rural areas of Canada. Immigrant dispersal, or “regionalization,” has been envisioned as a possible solution to these two challenges (Citizenship and Immigration Canada et al. 2003).

It is important to consider the theories of **transnationalism** because it offers a critical perspective on what makes a place attractive for recent immigrants. Transnationalism is a useful lens through which to study the interplay of local and global processes in the settlement process and the dynamic nature of population change through forced and voluntary migration (Nolin 2006). Transnationalism urges an exploration of the relationship between globalization and international migration and the myriad factors that link the processes of migration and settlement (Castles 2001; Portes 2001; Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994; Malberg 1997). Immigrants and refugees are likely to settle in areas where they can maintain transnational connections with their home country (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004). Transnationalism “accents the attachments migrants maintain with families, communities, traditions and causes outside the boundaries of the nation-state to which they have moved” (Vertovec 2001, 574).

Settlement occurs within the context of a labyrinth of relations that connect immigrants and refugees to multiple nation-states (Al-Ali and Koser 2002; Vertovec 1999; Portes 1997; Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Szanton Blanc; 1994). Transportation and communications advances enable migrants to develop relations and identities between both their country of origin and their country of resettlement (Vertovec 2001). In this scenario, immigrants may find non-metropolitan regions less attractive because they are farther from international airports; however, communications technologies (internet, telephone,

web-cams) provide a degree of connection for individuals in smaller centres. The fluid context in which immigrants are able to transcend national and regional boundaries raises the question of how to adjust an understanding of immigration (Ray 2002).

Along with the demands of changing employment opportunities and labour shortages, Canadian immigration policy has played a part in the location and composition of immigrant settlement in regions across Canada. As a result, there is an increased interest in studying the connection between policy making and the settlement patterns of new immigrants moving to highly populated metropolitan regions, and more recently towards smaller centres and communities (for example, Frideres 2006; Nolin and McCallum 2007; McCallum 2009; Reimer 2007a)

Interest in regional immigration has grown over the last decade, and in 2002, it became an important topic on the meeting agendas of Canada's federal, provincial and territorial immigration ministers. Former Minister Denis Coderre strongly supported investigating the benefits of regional immigration during his time in office. Since the wave of protest against his original proposal to have immigrants sign "social contracts" of commitment to settle (for a time) in a smaller community, the federal government has presented more positive, choice-based initiatives to encourage regionalization (Bauder 2003a). Unlike European discussions on the geographic dispersal of immigrants and refugees that speak of "spreading the burden," (Robinson, Andersson, and Musterd 2003), from the beginning, *Canadian dialogue has supported the notion of "sharing" or "spreading" the benefits of immigration* (Denton 2004). The shift of focus to "welcoming communities" exemplifies this turn towards valuing immigration and also highlights that the responsibilities for successful settlement do not rest solely on immigrant shoulders (MOSAIC 2006; WelcomeBC 2008a).

Indeed, Canadian public opinion towards immigration and immigrants is relatively positive compared to any other country (Hiebert 2003; Pew Research Centre 2002). Concern with the intense concentration of immigrants in the gateway cities of Vancouver, Toronto, and Montréal is coupled with a desire for the geographic dispersal of immigration to share growth and opportunity with smaller centres so they too can benefit from Canada's immigration vision.

In Canada, jurisdiction over immigration is complex and is constitutionally split between the federal and provincial governments. Studies stress the importance of collaboration among federal, provincial and municipal governments, along with local service providers (Di Biase and Bauder 2005). There has been a growing interest amongst provincial governments to attract immigrants, as expressed through the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP).

### *2.1.1 Provincial Nominee Program*

As noted, the government of Canada is concerned about immigration patterns and wants to achieve a greater dispersion of immigrants across various regions. The PNP is viewed as a tool that can potentially "fix" the problem of regional distribution (Vander Ploeg 2000).

The program, negotiated between federal and provincial governments (and now available in all provinces and most territories), is designed to identify skilled workers and direct them to a particular region. The provincial agreements allow provinces and territories to play a role in attracting workers with skills or individuals who will contribute to the economic development of that province (Fontana 2003). This immigration counts over and above the normal federal admissions each year and "represents a small step towards increasing immigrant populations outside of Canada's largest cities" (Krahn, Derwing, and Abu-laban 2003, 5). Over the space of five years, BC is able to fast-track

1000 provincial nominees through the immigration process, and the BC PNP has had some success attracting immigrants for hard-to-fill positions in health care and education (BC Chamber of Commerce 2007). According to recent numbers published by the Canada West Foundation, PNPs are demonstrating considerable growth, even if the overall numbers are relatively small compared to immigration as a whole. In 2004, provincial nominees made up 2.1 percent of BC's 20,525 economic class immigrants (Huynh 2004). In 2005, BC had 9.8 percent of all provincial nominees in Canada, which was the second highest rate after Manitoba (See Table 1).<sup>1</sup> Recent figures are higher, with 2,519 BC provincial nominees in 2007 and the provincial government indicating a "five-fold increase in PNP arrivals since 2003 (WelcomeBC 2008b, 1).

TABLE 1: PROVINCIAL NOMINEES BY PROVINCE IN 2005

PROVINCE	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE OF PROVINCIAL NOMINEES (%)
Manitoba	4619	57.4
British Columbia	789	9.8
Alberta	609	7.6
Ontario	483	6.0
Saskatchewan	468	5.8
New Brunswick	438	5.4
Nova Scotia	326	4.1
Prince Edward Island	204	2.5
Newfoundland	85	1.1
Quebec	26	0.3
Total	8047	100

Source: Manitoba Labour and Immigration 2006

Recent academic literature provides critiques of "regionalization" concepts that focus overly on the benefits of place and reduce the importance

1 The Manitoba government has acted on Premier's Economic Advisory Council's (PEAC) recommendation "to make immigration a central feature of the province's growth strategy" (Government of Manitoba 2007, 12) and the Provincial Nominee Program is a key component in achieving the goal of attracting 10,000 immigrants annually by 2006. The program was so successful that "Manitoba has committed to double the current immigration level [to 20,000 annually] over the next ten years" (Government of Manitoba 2007, 4).

of effects for immigrants (McIsaac 2003). Krahn, Derwing, and Abu-Laban (2003) assert that the federal and provincial governments (with the exception of Quebec) have not focused the discussion of geographical dispersion in terms of integration but rather in terms of economic development, the national decline in population, and resultant labour shortages. There is a call to **make immigrants a more important consideration in regionalization policy**. Place matters, and selecting a place for settlement has a deeply personal and determining impact on the lives of immigrants, or as Pile (1996, 55) asserts, "aspects of identity or self develop in relationship to place, but places set a brute limit on what individuals can make of themselves." As such, place is key when considering just how the various dimensions of physical environment impacts all aspects of one's social life.

## *2.2 Moving "out"*

Since regionalization's incarnation as policy, debate has raged about how to define regions and smaller centres, and where to direct regionalized settlement. Bryant and Joseph (2001, 132) warn that the term "rural" as a "residual category" risks homogenizing the diversity of non-metropolitan Canadian landscapes. One body of research emphasizes that dispersal policies should focus on second- and third-tier cities, cities that presently receive about 20 percent of new immigrants (Frideres 2006b). Growing opinions, however, argue that the definition of "small" must involve an element of **self-identification** by those places in Canada that wish to receive more immigrants. A town, a city, or an entire province may consider itself "small" while others may see it as large (Denton 2002; Citizenship and Immigration Canada et al. 2003, 3). Either way, centres that self-identify as "small" demonstrate the drive needed

for change and should be encouraged and helped if they have the desire to attract and retain more immigrants.

Recently, the focus has shifted to the concept of a “welcoming community.” The concept of “welcoming” suggests the proclivity of a given city’s population to *welcome* and *accept* new immigrants (Hiebert 2003; Reitz 1998). One definition of a welcoming community includes: appropriate housing, availability of initial accommodation, medical services, social services, education (language and general) for all ages and skill levels, access to arts, cultural, recreational and leisure programs, cross-cultural and anti-racism resources and voluntary support programs” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada et al. 2003, 9-12).

A constellation of effective and local settlement services makes a place more welcoming, as does the general receptivity of all residents. Media representations also affect public opinion and may have a role in the creation of more welcoming societies (Mahtani and Mountz 2002). This concept suits smaller communities since it focuses on how a place can create a more welcoming community and not exclusively on attractions already present in the area. Across Canada, non-metropolitan regions struggle to provide the same set of attractions as their metropolitan counterparts. Nonetheless, immigrants are found in Canada’s smaller and medium-sized cities, and the sheer volume of immigration to Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver should not dwarf the importance of immigration to these smaller centres. Recent literature also highlights the benefits immigrants can find in non-metropolitan centres. Reimer (2007b, 3), for example, states:

“[r]ural areas provide the commodities that give us a positive balance of trade, they hold the sources of our water, the location of recreation and natural amenities to which we turn to be refreshed, they contain much of our

biodiversity, they process most of the urban pollution, and they contain a large part of our social and cultural heritage.”

Some key factors influencing immigrant recruitment and retention are employment opportunities, social support, language, amenities, and community response (Reimer 2007b). The next section will discuss the economic and non-economic reasons why newcomers choose to move and settle in rural areas and small towns.

### *2.2.1 Economic*

An arriving immigrant bases his or her decision to live in a community on a number of factors. For some, the most significant reason for staying in a community is acceptable employment (Abu-Ayyash and Broch 2006; Voluntary Sector Initiative 2003). The first and most often cited reason why immigrants move to non-metropolitan regions is because they are **faring better economically** than their urban counterparts. This is an especially poignant fact in light of the steady decrease in overall immigrant economic output since the 1980s (Beshiri 2004; Bauder, 2003b; Reitz 2005), suggesting that many immigrants may be driven to move from their initial metropolitan communities by financial pressures or similar. Bauder (2003a, 13) observes that in British Columbia:

The newcomers' average income is higher in smaller communities than in Vancouver. Recent immigrant men averaged well above \$22,000 in places outside of Greater Vancouver, as opposed to only \$17,350 within it. Recent immigrant women in Victoria earned almost \$16,000; their counterparts in Vancouver made on average slightly more than \$12,000.

Such findings make a powerful case for regionalization at a time when the economic performance of new immigrants is significantly declining in comparison

to previous immigrant cohorts and Canadian-born workers (Hiebert 2006). Bauder's (2003b) study, however, does not include an analysis of labour force participation by immigration class, which may show that more family class immigrants settle in Vancouver while a higher proportion of economic immigrants settle outside of the metropolitan region. Furthermore, his study does not account for the different labour market experiences of visible minorities, and visible minority immigrants settle more frequently in metropolitan centres (Caron-Malenfant, Milan and Charron 2007). **Reduced cost of living** is another consideration. Home ownership, a milestone strongly connected with feelings of establishment and belonging, is more quickly achieved in housing markets outside of metropolitan areas (Hiebert, Mendez and Wylie 2008).

Despite the benefits of metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions, however, the majority of immigrants already know where they will be living upon landing in Canada (Ruddick 2004). Location choice is strongly connected to the presence of family or friends (Hyndman, Schuurman and Fiedler 2006; Ley and Tutchener 2001). The incentives and reasoning that work against settlement to Canada's smaller regions are emotional and difficult to compete with. Each community, however, possesses a unique set of benefits and challenges in attracting immigrants and encouraging them to stay.

### *2.2.2 Amenities*

Amenity migration is a type of migration where people move to regions that appear to offer the lifestyle they need or desire (Bowles and Beesley 1990). Amenity can be defined as an attractiveness that is invested in a place or area by virtue of its perceived pleasant characteristics (Coppack 1988). Therefore, amenity is a perceived commodity, which in rural areas is often represented by scenery, historical integrity or authenticity, and rural senti-

ment (Bachrach 2007–08; Lovett 2007). Rural places are often distinguished by their natural amenities, such as mountains, rivers, lakes, and beaches (Reimer 2007b). Tourism, seasonal migration and marketing brochures will likely play an important role in this process (Reimer 2007b). The process for destination selection based on amenity value is most likely to be different, however, for migrants seeking work or safety (Reimer 2007b).

### *2.2.3 Heritage and identity*

Reimer (2007b) identifies that rural places are set apart from urban places by their heritage, identity and infrastructure. Smaller centres may be able to provide a more organic and indigenous street-level culture that has too often been lost in the urban planning process and thus attract more newcomers into the community (Lovett 2007). Some smaller centres have promoted their historical, heritage, and cultural attractions to draw in more people. According to Reimer (2007b, 6), “our media, businesses and politicians make considerable use of this legacy often arguing that the institutional and value foundations of our nation are rooted in elements of our rural heritage .... In some ways, it is the characteristics of a place that maintain a person’s social and personal relations.” The particular place and the social relations it supports, therefore, can together serve as a destination to which potential immigration may flow (Reimer 2007b).

### *2.2.4 Social factors*

In a study to identify the future settlement needs of immigrants, Zehtab-Martin (2006, 101) found that many immigrants identified small towns and rural areas as a “safe place,” with “less crime,” and “a good place to raise children.” One of the immigrants from her rural Manitoba research commented

that rural small-town communities made it easier to get around the community and understand how different aspects worked, such as transportation, banks, and shopping (Zehtab-Martin 2006). Smaller places also provide opportunities for immigrants to get to know the various services that are available, whereas in larger city centres, it is often difficult for newcomers to familiarize themselves with services.

**Critical points:**

- There is a gap in the literature related to the conditions under which the social inclusion of immigrants thrives in rural communities.
- In order to support the integration and retention of immigrants, Fontana (2003, 15) argues that “settlement resources in regions of low immigration must come first if we expect newcomers to settle and stay in these areas.”
- Most research on immigrant settlement and retention has taken place in urban centres.
- One size does not fit all (Rose and Desmarais 2007); there is no typical rural reality. The percentage of rural dwellers varies across provinces and among rural areas. Differences among rural areas and regions carry important implications for public policy aimed at rural development.

## SECTION 3 - CANADIAN CONTRACTS

### *3.1 Regional Case Studies*

This section gathers some insight from recent research on immigrant settlement and experiences in regions across Canada and reflects the range of regionalization that is happening across the country. The review is divided

into sections based on Canada's provinces and regions. However, within this literature, there is debate about how to define these regions and smaller centres and on where to emphasize regionalized settlement. Bryant and Joseph (2001) warn that the term "rural," as a residual category consisting of areas outside of metropolitan regions, risks homogenizing what are in actuality a cornucopia of diverse Canadian rural landscapes. One project organized by Citizenship and Immigration Canada emphasizes that dispersal policies focus on second- and third-tier cities. A second Citizenship and Immigration Canada et al. study (2003), written in partnership with representatives from the settlement and voluntary sectors, argues that the definition of "small" must involve an element of self-identification by those places in Canada that wish to receive more immigrants. A town, a city, or an entire province may consider themselves "small" while others may see them as large (Citizenship and Immigration Canada et al. 2003). This study argues that self-identifying small centres should be encouraged and helped if they have the desire to retain or attract more immigrants. According to Burstein (2007), there is reason to be optimistic regarding the prospects of effecting modest change, as outlined in the next section.

### *3.1.1 Alberta*

The main concerns expressed in Alberta-based studies include the promotion of cross-cultural understanding, the need for more workers to fill labour shortages (with an emphasis on the oil sands), and competition for immigrants between Edmonton and Calgary (Azmiar 2005; Derwing et al. 2005; Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2001). Derwing et al. (2005) emphasize **the importance of accessible information**, especially through "immigrant-friendly" websites. They identify **the Internet as the second most common**

**source of information** that immigrants use when choosing where to move (after consultation with family and friends). Using website examples from Toronto, Vancouver and Manitoba, they suggest this is the simplest and most efficient approach to attract immigrants.

Abu-Laban et al. (1999) studied the mobility of refugees who landed and settled in seven smaller Alberta cities from 1992-1997. Their research found that a very high percentage of refugees moved from their original city of settlement (40 percent out of the original city, 25 percent out of the original province). **Secondary-migration** and **retention** have become prominent topics of research. The primary recommendation for retention from stakeholder group meetings and the survey data in the work done by Derwing et al. (2005) is that cities such as Edmonton should work towards ensuring immigrants feel accepted in their community, workplace, classrooms and neighbourhoods.

Alberta is interested in attracting and retaining more newcomers to the province for two main reasons (Derwing et al. 2005). The first is related to the economic prosperity of the region. The provincial government estimates that in the next ten years, Alberta will be short 100,000 workers (Province of Alberta 2007). Companies are already at the point where labour shortages are hurting business, mainly because the oil patch is drawing workers from other industries (Derwing et al. 2005).

The other main reason for wanting more immigrants to come and stay in the province is the clear connection between the overall vibrancy of a city and its immigrant population, a connection and vibrancy that are appealing to the "creative class." (Lovett 2007; Stolarick and Florida 2006).

### 3.1.2 *Manitoba*

Manitoba is the leading player in terms of putting innovative and complete regionalization strategies into place (Denton 2004). As one of the first provinces to sign a Provincial Nominee agreement (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2001), Manitoba is at the forefront of provincial involvement in immigration and was the first province to extend its Federal-Provincial agreement on immigration indefinitely (Azmier and Lozanski 2004). The Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program (MPNP) has a significant impact on immigration to the province and is a successful tool in assisting regional immigration initiatives (Silvius 2005). The province has committed significant resources in an aggressive strategy to attract immigrants.<sup>2</sup> In 2001, of the nine rural census tracts that made the top thirty tracts with the largest percentage of immigrant population, four were from Manitoba (Beshiri 2004). Successive governments over the past decade have continued to support the province's immigration strategy.

In a qualitative study of four of Manitoba's rural communities, Silvius and Annis (2005) found that immigrants in small centres appreciated the positive aspects of safety, proximity to parks/nature, and a healthy environment for their children. Special challenges included isolation, disconnection from family and friends, lack of services (especially language training), lack of funding, and disappointing job prospects. The major recommendation for service providers included more recruitment strategies for rural immigration, with the proviso that communities need to better **pool resources** to ensure the availability of services and that a **background study of location** should be conducted be-

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<sup>2</sup> The province's dedicated website ([www.immigratemanitoba.com](http://www.immigratemanitoba.com)) received 9.3 million hits in 2003.

fore promoting immigration since **every place offers different challenges** (Silvius and Annis 2005; Zehtab-Martin and Beesley 2007).

### *3.1.3 Ontario*

In 2001, Citizenship and Immigration Canada funded a study of settlement services and needs in four separate communities in northern Ontario. The study emphasized the uneven spread of services across northern regions of the province and the varied funding bodies, volunteers and organizers who made services available in their communities. The study's authors suggest **alternative approaches to bridging the physical distance between non-metropolitan regions** and urge a more creative attempt to provide **uniform levels of social and settlement services** across the sparsely populated Canadian landscape. Di Biase and Bauder (2005) study the distribution of immigrant settlement patterns and their link to labour force processes across Ontario. They recommend a better provision of services, co-ordination of immigrant skills with opportunities in the local labour market, as well as the marketing of smaller centres to potential international immigrants. They also stress the need for innovative ideas on **how various levels of government can help** to guide spatial settlement patterns.

### *3.1.4 The Atlantic Provinces*

Interest has been growing in the Maritimes around attracting and retaining immigrants. Provinces such as New Brunswick have begun to take stock of their resources and their ability to attract immigrant and minority populations (Radford 2007). Most communities in the Maritimes are facing a negative growth rate that impacts all aspects of community (Mills and Legault 2007), and immigration is seen as one potential solution to address issues of popula-

tion and economic decline. Since the 1990s, it has been recognized that the provinces' economic future would depend on immigration. By the second half of the 1990s, 630 to 750 immigrants as well as 150 to 170 refugees arrived in New Brunswick, but this did little to redress the falling population (Clews 2004). The Maritimes' policy focus has not only been on attracting immigrants but also on their distribution and retention across rural and urban areas (Akbari and Sun 2006). Akbari and Sun (2006) identified three important variables in both attracting and retaining immigrants in small municipalities of Atlantic Canada: (1) the presence of jobs; (2) the presence of other immigrants; and (3) the presence of an ethnic community network with which new arrivals can consult.

There are two major recent immigration policy initiatives in the Maritimes designed to attract and retain newcomers to the region: the **Atlantic Provincial Nominee Program** and the initiative to **attract international students** (Province of Nova Scotia 2005). All four Atlantic Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador have signed a Provincial Nominee Agreement. In most cases, the PNP is a five-year agreement that allows each Atlantic province to nominate 1,000 immigrants over a five-year period (Akbari and Sun 2006).

**International students trained in Canada** do not face the issue of foreign credential recognition (Akbari and Sun 2006; The Province of Nova Scotia 2005) that often plagues their foreign-educated counterparts seeking work in Canada. In an effort to attract and retain international students, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia recently signed agreements with Citizenship and Immigration Canada to **allow students to work in their fields of study** for two years after completing their education. The agreement also allows international students to **work off campus** for up to twenty hours per week.

Allowing international students to gain valuable Canadian work experience off campus prepares them to be fully adapted to the Canadian workforce and society (Akbari and Sun 2006), should they choose to settle here permanently.

### *3.1.5 Research in British Columbia*

#### Immigration context

In its 2003 report on regional labour market experiences, Statistics Canada identified BC as the second most attractive destination for newcomers. The province also appears to be gaining the largest share of immigration when compared to other provinces. BC received 15 percent of all immigrants to Canada in 2003. During that same time period, 87 percent of BC immigrants new to Canada moved to the Greater Vancouver Regional District, while 2.2 percent moved to Victoria and 9.8 percent to other locations across the province (Metropolis 2003). Central to new initiatives are strategies for a more balanced geographic distribution of immigrants and refugee re-settlement to small cities, towns, and rural areas of Canada.

#### **Academic Insights**

Walton-Roberts' (2005) work on immigrants in Squamish and Kelowna provides important insight on non-metropolitan settlement issues in the province. Walton-Roberts (2005) studied the role taken by regional governments in Squamish and Kelowna to attract and retain immigrants. Her research underscores **the impact of pre-existing social and economic contexts** as well as the importance of **municipal, provincial and federal cooperation** for the successful attraction, retention and subsequent settlement experiences for immigrants in these areas. Walton-Roberts also points out that the very demographic change that justifies relatively high immigration numbers, re-

shapes the labour market demands of the community. As is the case in many small towns, **a graying population relies less on resource-dependence and becomes increasingly oriented towards personal services, especially health care.** Finding skilled workers to fill positions requires a degree of coordination between local and regional levels of government to allow for more local selection control. Recent provincial cutbacks have reduced the funding for social and health care services in smaller communities. Funding cuts work to impede dispersed immigrant settlement and saddle municipalities, who may have no experience organizing immigrant services, with the responsibility to address their needs along with wider social service programs.

Henin and Bennett (2002), in a study of Latin American and African immigrants in Victoria, focused on the experiences of **visible minority immigrants** and identify **several obstacles to inclusion**, including the challenges of finding work in their field of training (a complex, national problem) and of securing decent, affordable housing (a challenge heightened by Victoria's tight housing market). Using a qualitative research approach, both of these studies have opened up regionalization to the discussion of variable immigrant experience, the uneven geographies of racism (see Burstein 2007; Peake and Ray 2001), employment discrimination, and credential recognition in BC.

Using a statistical index based on data from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, Hyndman et al. (2006) work out a "geography of desirability" for five of Canada's middle-sized cities (Victoria, Kelowna, Prince George, Prince Rupert and Nanaimo). The study, intended to present an immigrant perspective, reveals several key points. The top four motivations for moving were jobs (32.3 percent) and business prospects (5.5 percent); the presence of family and friends (35.6 percent); education prospects (12.1 percent); and lifestyle considerations. The research emphasizes, however, that

**while a quantitative study reveals one pattern of desirability, qualitative research will often reveal another.** Critical factors like racism (Walton-Roberts 2005; Henin and Bennett 2002) and the mismatch between (industrial) immigrant skills and the dominance of service sector jobs in medium-sized cities (Sherrell, Hyndman, and Preniqi 2005) are not so easily revealed by numbers alone. Access to a range of reputable educational facilities is also of paramount importance in choosing a place to settle in BC (Waters 2001). Labour market integration is critical to establishing a sense of achievement and belonging (Halseth 1999). In addition, certain regions boast a natural beauty that tips the scales of interest towards quality of life and a love for the surrounding environment.

Central to new initiatives are strategies for a more balanced geographic distribution of immigrants and refugee re-settlement to small cities, towns, and rural areas of Canada. Settlement service provision for northern BC operates from Prince George and struggles to serve a relatively small number of recent immigrants, thinly spread throughout the vast region.

**Critical points:**

- Qualitative as well as quantitative research is necessary to account for the specificity of place and the complexity of settlement experiences and choices.
- A single “cookie cutter” approach to regional development across Canada or within provinces is neither possible nor desirable.
- No clear line exists that connects the regional dispersal of immigration and the economic restructuring of rural and northern Canada.

- Success can be measured variably. Race, gender and the specificity of place introduce other realms of complexity to settlement experiences that must be seriously considered.
- Municipal governments interested in attracting immigrants must forecast not only their present needs but also their future labour market needs, and work together with all layers of government to share the responsibility of creating a welcoming place.

### *3.2 Regional Immigration Initiative*

The federal and provincial governments recognize the challenge in ensuring that all parts of Canada share in the benefits of immigration. Growing concern with the intense concentration of immigrants in the gateway cities of Vancouver, Toronto, and Montréal is coupled with a desire for the regionalization of immigration and the opportunity for smaller centres to benefit from Canada's immigration vision.

Upon renewing the *Agreement for Canada—British Columbia Cooperation on Immigration* in April 2004, the federal department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and the then-named Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services (MCAWS) made a commitment to the Regional Immigration Initiative (RII) in BC. Focused on the potential of attracting business entrepreneurs, skilled workers, international students and investment dollars, the initiative carried three principle goals:

1. To facilitate the attraction and retention of immigrants to communities outside the Greater Vancouver Region
2. To support the economic development of rural communities within BC

3. To develop strategies to improve the ability and capacity of smaller cities and communities outside of the Greater Vancouver Area to attract and retain immigrants.

Jumpstarting the initiative in August 2004, the immigration division of MCAWS put out a call for proposals from mid- and small-sized communities in BC. A competitive proposal process selected eight communities, each within different regional districts that worked in close partnership with the community and contractors to identify and develop the resources needed for the attraction and retention of immigrants. It is critical to keep in mind that the Regional Immigrant Initiative was always a pilot project and not necessarily a continuous initiative (Zehr 2004). Many lessons can be derived from the work that has been done. The regions and communities chosen were Abbotsford, Alberni-Clayoquot, Nanaimo, Powell River, the Okanagan, Prince George, Revelstoke, and Vernon. These communities reflect a range of regionalization processes within the province, demonstrating the diversity of responses to immigrants moving into rural and smaller communities. The following is a summary discussion of the key findings from the regional reports.

### **Starting points**

Two basic restrictions guided the path that each of the eight reports took. The first limitation was time; communities normally had from seven to eleven months to complete their project. The base funding provided by MCAWS was the second limitation, with many projects turning to the local government and businesses to obtain supplementary funding.

Perhaps most challenging, though, was the starting point from which most of the projects began. Regionalization and immigration strategy were relatively quiet topics in several of the communities (with the exception of Prince

George and Abbotsford). A general reconnaissance of the issue in each community would have been helpful, i.e., a gathering to be followed by action. Several of the projects concluded that their projects were limited by time, money and the ability to gather already busy people to a project requiring time-consuming, imaginative, visioning processes. At the time of this writing, more than one project has unfinished/unsubmitted portions. **Projects were limited by time, funding, and the necessity in most cases to first collect exploratory information about immigration and settlement in their community.**

### **Methodological Approaches**

Each of the eight projects engaged in one or all of the following methodological steps, as specified:

4. Create an Advisory Committee, Team, or Working Group of people involved in the community who will focus effort and attention on the issue of immigration. All eight projects completed this step.
5. Issue a survey to immigrants and stakeholders in the community (Vernon, Alberni-Clayquot, Powell River).
6. Run focus groups with different involved parts of the community (Alberni-Clayquot, Abbotsford, Prince George, Revelstoke, Powell River).
7. Conduct informational interviews with stakeholders, and in some cases immigrants themselves, to gauge what the community needs to attract, retain or market to new immigrants (Abbotsford, Okanagan, Prince George, Revelstoke, Powell River).
8. Review relevant literature (Powell River, Prince George, Revelstoke, Nanaimo).

9. Conduct a labour force gap analysis or community asset profile (Powell River, Abbotsford).

Methodological steps addressed three pertinent needs in each scenario:

1. The need to collaborate/network with all parts of the community
2. The need to better understand the local economic and social climate
3. The need to guide a useful set of actions

**Productive actions:**

The output of each project differed enormously, as did the number and depth of analysis of methodologies. Some projects achieved product output, while others focused on laying the path for action at a later date. Generally, each of the reports emphasized the following seven products of their report:

1. Create an action plan for attraction and retention.
2. Establish a website or listserv production to unite services, links and people in one place.
3. Produce a template or guide on immigration strategy for use by other communities.
4. Re-brand city and distribute promotional material to attract immigrants.
5. Make accessible an assessment of what jobs need to be filled, what areas suffer from labour shortages, and what business opportunities exist.
6. Use public education programs, local media, and festivals to publicize immigration as positive to all community residents.
7. Create human connections and relationships useful for collaboration. All reports were actively involved in this action.

The most standout, effective and innovative of the action plans include the following recommendations:

- 1. Introduce the concept of aftercare (Powell River).** Aftercare stresses the need to provide services for new immigrants to help after initial settlement and during the integration process. Funding based on the number of new immigrants hinders the ability for smaller communities to attract new migrants. **Aftercare services need to be developed and funded before immigrants will arrive.**
- 2. Harvest unorthodox opportunities for understanding (Vernon).** Through the survey responses received from entrepreneurial immigrants, this project discovered that volunteering was a “key component in understanding their new community and culture.” The youth buddy program in Abbotsford is another example of a more direct opportunity to share knowledge and create friendships between new and old residents.
- 3. Make diversity a part of the process (Vernon).** Immigration affects all aspects of the community, and the discussion requires many perspectives. Advisory committees should embody the diversity the community hopes to achieve.
- 4. Connecting through technology is one thing; people are what matter.** The idea of an attractive, comprehensive and intuitive one-stop-shop settlement website is very popular and highly effective (Abbotsford). Still, reports from the smallest communities emphasized the need for a full-time, dedicated, salaried person in the community to act as nodal point for all things immigration (Revelstoke, Powell River, Alberni-Clayquot). Larger communities expressed the need for an umbrella agency (Abbotsford).

- 5. Target secondary migrants, international students and family members (Revelstoke, Nanaimo, Powell River).** Send marketing tools to immigrants who are already familiar with Canada, who may be frustrated with housing costs in Canadian metropolitan areas, and who may have already vacationed or visited the region. Immigrant families already living in the community may know of relatives who are interested in relocating.
- 6. Unite the province (Revelstoke).** Revelstoke recommends that the Union of BC Municipalities advocate for improvements to the federal immigration application processing system. A regional immigration initiative needs provincial guidance, and already burdened municipalities would benefit from a larger-scale collaboration with the provincial government, rather than accepting immigrant attraction as a local responsibility.
- 7. Wine and dine (Okanagan).** Quintessentially different from the other studies, the Okanagan report submitted by the United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society (S.U.C.C.E.S.S.) invited forty-seven delegates from Vancouver's Chinese business community to tour the Okanagan. On a three-day tour, the entrepreneurial immigrants tasted the foods, wine, economic climate, and settlement services of a region they previously knew little about. Post-tour, 80 percent communicated their intent to further explore the opportunities in the region, and half of the delegates are thinking about the possibility of relocating to the Okanagan-Similkameen region.
- 8. Establish a clearing house of current, relevant real estate properties (Abbotsford).** The Abbotsford report served to highlight the challenging settlement experiences little touched upon by the other reports. This project

moves past the concept of providing a listing of community resources and supporting an individual's aspirations to start a business, directly to providing an opportunity to take up a place in the community.

**9. Business mentorship programs (Nanaimo, Abbotsford).** Akin to the "buddy" and "host" programs set up by various community services groups (YMCA, for example), this matching of immigrant and local business persons helps to clarify the path to starting a business in Canada. This program not only helps demystify some bureaucratic procedures but also serves as a starting point for networking.

One of the critical differences among the eight reports was **the class of immigrants on which each focused**. This finding highlights that the eight communities reflect the range of regionalization occurring in BC. For instance, Prince George focused its report entirely on attracting and retaining skilled immigrants due to the community's need to fill a significant skilled labour shortage. In contrast, the Vernon and Okanagan reports focused on the attraction and retention of entrepreneurial immigrants and their investment dollars, though they specify that immigrant entrepreneurs are not exclusively economic class business immigrants, as many immigrants become entrepreneurs after their initial move to Canada. Those two studies closely examined secondary migration—drawing successful immigrants from Vancouver into the Okanagan and seeing the businesses they start create jobs for the local population. Alberni-Clayoquot, Abbotsford, Powell River, Nanaimo and Revelstoke all make no distinction between the class of immigrant they aimed to attract, though each of those reports still connected immigration with potential economic revitalization (a correlation encouraged by the mandate of the RII). Abbotsford, Nanaimo and Revelstoke moved quickly forward with the spirit of creating a "Welcoming Community" for all newcomers.

Considered as individual reports, each is expansive, and most are very productive.

Considered as a group, it becomes obvious that two internal tensions challenged the reports and, in the end, reduced their effectiveness.

1. The nature of a competitive-bid funding contest rewarded strong proposals; however, it also fragmented service providers and municipalities. Regions and communities in some cases became divided over who would submit the bid to MCAWS. Furthermore, at this beginning stage, the spirit of competition between different regions was not productive. Municipalities expended time and effort to understand the reception climate for immigration in their communities and were then responsible for taking action. A tool provided by the Provincial government, such as the now available *Attracting and Retaining Immigrants: A Tool Box of Ideas* (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2005a), removes a layer of work from municipalities and unites the Province in a series of recommended actions and questions. A regional acting group, once given a template to stray from, may have worked more effectively towards local, innovative approaches to the regionalization debate. Regionalization is a topic that requires provincial visioning and regional collaboration. Individualistic competition between communities is too demanding and counter-intuitive to BC's larger economic goals.
2. A disparity between the **purpose** of attracting newcomers and the **ability** to host and serve new immigrants became evident in the reports. "Regionalization" as a concept rests uneasily between the realms of tactic and responsibility. Will regionalization be a component of rural economic development or is it a policy to enhance the ability of smaller centres and rural areas to create welcoming communities that will, in turn, ultimately

even out the geography of race, diversity, and the future Canadian population? Should efforts be focused on the production of a marketable image or on establishing reputable settlement services? Left on their own, communities grapple with this question and the breadth of possibilities expands exponentially, resulting in an overwhelming number of possible avenues. The concept needs to be carefully refined and its meaning discussed frankly and openly with all regions of BC.

The push to create welcoming cities, complete with services, is based largely on a simple logic: immigrants will not stay unless they enjoy a certain quality of life and have employment opportunities, and immigrants who have a positive experience will tell families and friends in their home country or elsewhere in Canada. Thus, the best marketing is often spread by word-of-mouth, through immigrants' own satisfaction with settlement choice.

## SECTION 4 - RECOMMENDATIONS

### *4.1 Recap*

The purpose of the previous sections was to outline a framework for understanding the complexity of, and different factors influencing, the regionalization of immigration. As a result, a number of literatures were drawn upon to highlight the uneven geographic distribution of immigrants. First, the distribution of immigrants was outlined because it has been a concern for both federal and provincial governments (Metropolis 2003). As indicated in the previous section, drawing on the examples of Montréal, Toronto, and Vancouver, the urban concentration of immigrants has accelerated a change in the social geographies of fast-growing cities, while rural and small cities in Canada appear to have experienced limited change by comparison. However, there is a

risk in discounting the diversity of non-metropolitan areas by defining all areas outside of metropolitan regions as “rural” (Bryant and Joseph 2001).

As such, an element of **self-identification** of “small” or “rural” places in Canada desiring immigration is an important consideration. By self-identifying as small and/or rural, communities demonstrate that they possess the drive to influence the services they require; they should consequently be encouraged to do so if they wish to receive more immigrants. Although a large volume of immigrants move to Montréal, Toronto, and Vancouver, a not insignificant number of immigrants are also moving to small- and medium-sized cities. Immigration to smaller Canadian cities provides benefits to immigrants such as economic incentives, heritage and identity, amenities, and social factors.

Second, the growing interest of federal and provincial governments towards the PNP was reviewed to outline how such a program can be a “tool” used to address the problem of regional distribution. It has been argued that federal and provincial governments have framed the discussion of geographical dispersion in terms of economic development rather than in terms of social integration (Krahn, Derwing, and Abu-Laban 2003). The regionalization perspective builds on the importance of place by asserting the interaction of physical, economic and social factors in drawing newcomers. These factors clearly need to be considered when addressing regional distribution.

Third, the concept of a “welcoming community” was outlined to examine the shift in focus from how immigrants can benefit rural economic development to what constitutes a “welcoming community” in the BC context. The definition used to describe “welcoming communities” in our provincial context is largely positive and offers a fuller understanding of the range of issues any “welcoming community” would have to consider. However, the definition is

squarely focused on service provision, and while it does address the need to educate the public about multiculturalism and diversity, those concepts are widely debated and differentially understood.

The remaining sections will highlight some of the contradictory and dual processes ongoing at the federal and provincial level related to immigrant regionalization. An outline of the role that Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW) play in the regionalization of immigrants is also included. This section will conclude with some recommendations for future research and identify some of the gaps in the literature.

#### *4.2 Conflicting processes*

As outlined in previous sections, federal and provincial governments are encouraging immigrant regionalization programs in order to achieve a greater geographic dispersion of immigrants. People come into Canada through a variety of migratory classes, both temporary and permanent. However, these policies are seemingly incongruent because the TFW policy actively discourages permanent settlement while immigration policy is intended to encourage it. For example, despite initiatives and programs aimed at encouraging permanent immigration to BC, the BC government has recently been attracting TFW to fill jobs within the province that could potentially have been used to attract immigrants (Fudge and MacPhail 2009; MacPhail and Bowles 2008).

The Province of BC is strongly encouraging immigration and settlement outside of Vancouver and Victoria. On June 15, 2007, the Honorable Wally Oppal, then-Minister responsible for Multiculturalism, announced that \$43 million was to be directed toward new and expanded initiatives aimed at supporting welcoming and inclusive communities for immigrants (Oppal 2007, 30). He states that:

Welcome BC represents a total investment made by the federal and provincial governments of \$217 million over the next two years and brings together the Province's comprehensive immigrant settlement and multiculturalism strategies under one umbrella. These programs and initiatives aim to ease the transition to living in our province for immigrants and their families and build greater capacity in all communities to support our goals for multiculturalism.

While provincial and federal governments are encouraging immigration to BC and other provinces by spending millions of dollars on immigrant services, settlement, and multiculturalism, the Government of Canada is also encouraging and promoting TFW. In recent years, Canada has facilitated influxes of temporary workers to help overcome demographic deficits and to fill essential employment vacancies. Through the TFW Program and other initiatives, the Canadian government is working to help keep the economy strong and to help Canadian employers meet their labour force needs. Moreover, thousands of foreign agricultural workers are flown into the country annually to supplement the domestic workforce (Papademetriou 2009; Preibisch 2007).

The Honourable Monte Solberg, then-Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, announced changes to the TFW Program during a speech presented on February 23, 2007 to make it easier for employers to meet their labour market needs (Solberg 2007). He stated that, "every year, Canadian employers hire thousands of foreign workers to help address skill and labour shortages. Human Resources and Social Development Canada/Service Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada help ensure that foreign workers support economic growth in Canada" (Solberg 2007).

In order to meet the "needs" of the Canadian agricultural sector, farmers in provinces such as BC hire temporary workers from Mexico, Jamaica, and other parts of the Caribbean through the Seasonal Agricultural Workers

Program (SAWP). During its first operational year in 1966, the SAWP brought in fewer than 300 seasonal workers; by 2006, this figure exceeded 20,000 (Basok 2004). At the same time, immigrants are encouraged to move to non-metropolitan regions with the goal of finding valuable employment but only offered limited services to support this transition. What will the outcome be should employers and industries choose to encourage TFW rather than permanent residents to fill their "labour shortages"? Our question is, "*Why are the Canadian and British Columbia governments spending millions of dollars on two different programs whose goals and final outcomes contradict one another?*"

A closer examination of the relationships amongst the different Ministries in BC might help to explain the promotion and funding of these two seemingly contradictory programs. In recent years, multiple changes have been made to the organization of the BC government's Ministries. The Ministry of Economic Development addresses the Provincial Nominees entering the province, while the Minister responsible for Multiculturalism is housed with the Ministry of the Attorney General and TFW are handled at the Federal level. With so many Ministries dealing with similar immigrant, regional, and service needs, communication must remain constant in order to have successful relationships and positive outcomes for communities and new immigrants. Lack of communication among stakeholders can lead to programs whose goals are not necessarily compatible. Therefore, there is a need for increased discussion so programs complement rather than oppose each other, benefiting both economic development and immigrants themselves.

Current immigrant policies are key to this discussion, specifically the points system, which regulates permanent immigrant entry into Canada. The points system **indirectly encourages metropolitan settlement and** creates an

unintended **push** for immigrants to move to **urban** areas by prioritizing highly skilled, educated, business owners, and others for immigration to Canada over those with different skills and education who might be drawn to non-metropolitan regions. The majority of economic class immigrants entering Canada are skilled and possess a level of education slightly above the average Canadian adult (Reitz 2001). As noted earlier, these immigrants are drawn to the resources as well as business and employment opportunities available in metropolitan centres.

At the same time, the Canadian government is encouraging people from different countries to enter Canada as temporary foreign workers (TFW), particularly agricultural, service, and construction workers. The skills possessed by some of these workers potentially attract them to rural, northern, and/or non-metropolitan areas. These workers consequently have the potential to contribute to the re-distribution of immigrants by settling in non-metropolitan regions, since migrants must necessarily consider the availability of work in their field of employment when choosing a place to inhabit. However, as several researchers highlight, the nature of the TFW Program undermines individual livelihood security and discourages settlement and social integration into the communities in which they temporarily reside (Ferguson 2007; Preibisch 2004). As the majority of Canada's seasonal agricultural workers are concentrated in the rural landscape of Canada, rurality plays a central role in shaping migrant experiences in the program.

Some of the literature and policies related to immigrant regionalization treat all non-metropolitan settlement as "rural" (Manitoba Labour and Immigration 2008; Immigration Canada Lawyers 2007; Metropolis 2003). Diverse communities dot the BC and Canadian landscape and work to encourage the movement of immigrants into their community; these places are not necessarily

rural, however, as some are second- and third-tier cities (Walton-Roberts 2005).

Prince George, BC is such an example. The city receives the majority of immigrants in the northern BC region and is host to the Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society (IMSS), which provides regional “immigrant” services (Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society 2007) across a vast landscape, covering roughly half of the province’s territory. IMSS is the only designated immigrant service provider in BC’s North and struggles to serve a relatively small number of recent immigrants from countries as diverse as India, the Philippines, South Africa, Russia, Iran, and Nigeria. These immigrants are thinly spread throughout the vast region (McCallum, Nolin, and Halseth 2007).

As Rose and Desmarais (2007) state, one size does not fit all; no typical rural and/or remote reality exists. Rural, isolated, and northern communities vary across Canada’s landscape. The spaces of inclusion and exclusion shape the cultural and physical landscape of the North (Nolin and MacCallum 2007). It is a dynamic place, full of residents often drawn by employment rather than aesthetics, a well-paying job rather than a family or extended social network (Halseth 1999).

Geographers Nolin and Halseth are conducting a study focused on “enhancing the warmth of welcome in northern BC” (Zehtab-Martin, Nolin, Halseth, and Hanlon 2008; Zehtab-Martin, Halseth, Hanlon and Nolin 2008). This research examines the settlement process, social and economic integration, and retention experiences of immigrants and refugees in the northern communities of Fort St. John, Terrace, and Prince George. Participants in each of these communities identified regionalization of services as an important el-

ement to provide to immigrants. However, they distinguished that BC's North-West (Terrace), North-East (Fort St. John) and central (Prince George) regions were all very different and that the "north" should not be characterized as homogeneous.

The overall goal of this project, as outlined in previous sections, is to develop a better understanding of the **complexity of regionalization** in BC and to develop recommendations and opportunities for community-based solutions for attracting and retaining immigrants. The final section will provide some recommendations and identify gaps in the literature.

#### *4.3 Recommendations and future research needs*

**Bottom-up process is needed.** The government needs to place emphasis on bottom-up or grassroots processes to understand the types of "needs" of communities, immigrants, and service organizations. Interaction with service providers and immigrants is key to identifying what is working in a community and what is not. Generalizations should not be made which equate "regional immigration" with "rural" as the complexity of "rural," "northern," "isolated," "small town," and "non-metropolitan" communities is quite stunning.

**Encourage immigrants with appropriate skills to settle in non-metropolitan areas instead of encouraging their arrival as temporary foreign workers. Moreover, introduce initiatives that allow some TFW to settle permanently.** The points system is in need of adjustment to correct the unintended encouragement of metropolitan settlement. The example of Brandon, Manitoba and surrounding area is illustrative of this point. A recent influx of hundreds of TFWs into Brandon and the surrounding area is connected to labour shortages in low- and highly

skilled job opportunities and expanding operations at Maple Leaf Foods (a meat-packing industry). Recruitment and hiring practices are adapting and extend employee searches beyond the provincial labour pool to overseas countries. Regulated by the Federal government, the TFW program offers an expedited process for recruiting and hiring foreign workers with lower skill levels on a temporary basis. Of particular importance, the Manitoba TFW program enables workers to eventually apply to the Provincial Nominee Program, thus contributing to the province's annual immigration targets (permanent) and dramatically changing the demographics of rural and smaller centres. Most importantly, this strategy encourages permanent rather than temporary settlement in the province.

**Local knowledge.** For many communities, the influx of immigrants is a new phenomenon. Demand is high for locally based training and information regarding the needs of both community and immigrants. The process of collaboration and coordination of policy makers, government, and local community members is crucial. Only through successful coordination and communication can the community become aware of who will soon be arriving. This knowledge allows the community to prepare and make sure that the appropriate information needed by immigrants is made available.

**Regional Employment Model (REM).** BC Stats, with the financial assistance of the Ministry of Advanced Education, developed the REM. This model was designed to forecast industrial and occupational employment needs in regions of BC. Lack of local knowledge as a component is a real limitation of this model. A greater emphasis on community-specific needs is crucial and can be achieved through the incorporation and appreciation of qualitative

research. Qualitative research, combined with findings from the REM, would enhance the employment projection needs throughout the province.

**Language-specific services.** In 2006, 42,208 new immigrants arrived in BC (BC Stats 2007). The most common immigrant group arriving has come through the economic class, which accounted for 61.1 percent of new immigrants to BC. As noted earlier, many of these immigrants are primarily motivated by employment and business opportunities and may be drawn to the resources more readily available in urban centres. Contrastingly, migrants entering through the family reunification class tend initially to settle where there is a family presence, rather than be influenced by other factors such as language skills, available services, or work experience (Telegdi 2006). For these immigrants, the existence of settlement support services in their local communities is crucial. Based on data from BC Stats (2007), it is recommended that providing more information about who is coming to the community can help service providers prepare the proper language specific materials and services. For instance, if a community was made aware of an expected influx of immigrants from China, India, and the Philippines, preparation of appropriate settlement services, in the immigrant's home language, would enhance the initial settlement experience and encourage retention.

**Gaps in data.** Service providers, community members, and policy makers face a lack of knowledge about why some people choose to remain and why others leave. Much of the research that exists is concentrated on our largest Canadian city centres such as Montréal, Toronto, Vancouver, Edmonton, and Ottawa. We are limited in our understanding of non-metropolitan settlement. What causes people to stay or go? Too few studies have been

done on secondary migration decision-making, and this deficiency limits our understanding of immigrant settlement in Canada.

A concerted effort to understand migration and settlement processes throughout BC is necessary. Based on the Provincial government's economic initiatives, we will see far more temporary foreign workers employed outside of Vancouver and fewer permanent immigrants making rural, small town BC their home.

### **Future Research Needs**

1. Priority must be given to address the "unintended" concentrated settlement pattern in the Lower Mainland due to the contemporary criteria for acceptance as a Permanent Resident. The point system, as we have highlighted, rewards an urban-based applicant (with the focus on education, languages, skills, and so forth) and does not reward rural-based applicants in the same way.
2. Priority must also be given to address the "intended" rural, small town, and isolated settlement of an increasing number of foreign temporary workers (TFW), foreign brides, and others without permanent status within BC.

Research questions include:

- Where are TFWs working within the province?
- What happens to these workers after their contract is complete?
- How many people transition from TFW status to requests for and acceptance as Permanent Residents?
- For those who transition, do they remain in place or relocate elsewhere (within the province or beyond)?
- Are communities interested in the permanent settlement of newcomers or TFWs in this precarious economic reality?

- If they are only (or mostly) interested in TFWs, does this fit with the provincial government's newer concept of "welcoming communities"? What have communities and employers experienced when welcoming TFWs into their places of employment or residence?
3. Priority must be given to addressing the relationship between regionalization of immigration initiatives and regional interests and the need for increased opportunities for the BC aboriginal population.
  4. Clarification, through targeted research of government decision-makers, is needed on the goals of regionalization. For example, is regionalization needed to ease pressure on Lower Mainland communities OR is regionalization attractive to communities with labour shortages? If this process is to assist with labour shortages in rural, small town, and/or isolated communities, then research must be undertaken to determine which strategy best offers a stable, desirable plan of action: encouraging and retaining immigrant labour or empowering and educating indigenous residents. Supported research must consult with indigenous communities particularly in regions of so-called labour shortages to better identify how to transition this growing demographic into the labour market.
  5. A coordinated series of roundtable discussions beyond the Lower Mainland and Victoria must be initiated to bring community decision-makers, immigrant service providers, informal immigrant service providers (i.e., church leaders), and others together to discuss priorities, needs, concerns, successes, and best practices.

We close with some final questions that remain with us after examining BC's regionalization of immigration initiatives.

- Are the goals of regionalization of immigration the same for the federal and provincial governments? Are these the same for communities beyond BC's Lower Mainland? Are communities of BC's north, Central Interior, and coastal communities interested in participating in these discussions when faced with ongoing population decline?
- Is the search for temporary foreign workers a better option for communities on precarious economic footing? If so, what do various communities indicate are their desired criteria for settlement? Short-term workers only? Temporary workers who have the option to permanently settle?
- Through further research, can we identify if the initiatives of "welcoming communities," "regionalization," and TFW are compatible or contradictory?

Communities throughout British Columbia are being asked to grapple with these complex processes with limited knowledge of their long-term (or even short-term) outcomes. We hope these questions will encourage researchers and community decision-makers to seek out more information and use them as a springboard for future research.

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