



# METROPOLIS BRITISH COLUMBIA

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### **The Integration and Inclusion of Newcomers in British Columbia**

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# **Metropolis British Columbia**

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

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### **THE INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION OF NEWCOMERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

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## INTRODUCTION

Canada is often seen from the outside as an example of good practice on immigrant integration. In this paper we outline the complex system that supports newcomer settlement and integration in British Columbia, a system that has evolved considerably in recent years. From a European perspective, this is a story of “making the small big,” that is, using a limited set of resources to generate an elaborate system that is quite comprehensive. Much of this has been built on a foundation of voluntary activities; in recent years, however, the state has become more fully committed to improve the reception of newcomers, and a surprisingly large number of new programs have been introduced, either in partnership with non-government organizations or branches of municipal government. To a large extent, this is an unexpected development, since the provincial government has been seeking to reduce its spending in social policy rather than increase it.

We adopt two conceptual starting points in this paper that have helped us understand the changing nature of settlement and integration systems and policies in British Columbia. First, initiatives on settlement and integration have been shaped by an ideology of neo-liberalism that has been pervasive in BC since the decisive 2001 election, when the Liberal Party came to power after ten years of government by the New Democratic Party. Shortly after assuming office, the Liberals introduced a major reduction in personal income tax and then began a determined effort to trim expenditures. The implications for managing integration have been widespread. Programs have been evaluated for their efficiency and outcomes and, where possible, funding streams have been reorganized around an ethos of competition and cost-recovery.

These changes have significantly affected the framework of settlement service delivery in the province.

Second, we believe it helpful to contextualize our discussion of settlement policy by outlining four different configurations that such policy could take:

- Newcomers could be entirely responsible for their own settlement and integration, with no services provided for them. That is, there could be no government involvement on this issue. Newcomers would be expected to make all of the adjustments required of living in a new society, while there would be no expectation for society to change as a result of immigration.
- There could be a single branch or department of government given the task to provide settlement and integration services. The services could be delivered by government itself or through other agencies, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). But the attention and activity of government would be limited, with immigrant integration operating in a kind of “silo,” isolated from the rest of the state.
- The goal of integration could become so important that it is adopted throughout government (often called a “whole of government approach”), with many departments coordinating their efforts across the fields of social and economic policy. Fully developed, such a system would include all three orders of government working to common purpose.
- An additional element could be added to coordinated activities across government, by diffusing the expectation for integration to society more broadly. This could take the form of partnerships between government, the private sector, and various community organizations, including NGOs, and would attempt to enhance the ability of society to welcome and accept newcomers. That is, society as a whole would adjust itself to receive and

accommodate newcomers, with government assuming a leadership role but nevertheless working in unison with other actors and institutions.

We believe this schematic way of considering government involvement in the settlement and integration process helps focus our assessment of BC's role. Responsibility for the integration and inclusion of newcomers and minorities in BC is jurisdictionally complex. In broad terms the BC government has always been in charge of social services, health, education, and so on, things that immigrants use just like everyone else. Until recently the federal government was in charge of providing specific settlement services for immigrants in BC. Beginning in 1991, with the signing of the Cullen-Couture Agreement, this changed. The paper will explain the nature of the shifting responsibilities and discuss how these changes intersected with larger developments in the governance of BC, namely the neoliberal turn described earlier.

In general, the scale of settlement services, particularly language training, was rather poor in BC relative to the rest of Canada, but new investments in the settlement system since 2006 mean the situation is changing rapidly. While much of this is based on additional money from Ottawa, the province has also been allocating funds to several of its own priorities. We offer an explanation for this unexpected trend (program growth in an age of fiscal austerity) later in the paper.

At the present time, BC is establishing a number of innovative programs, well beyond what would have been imagined five or so years ago. The Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program (WICWP) is one such example. Moreover, the emphasis of the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development (ALMD)—the ministry primarily responsible for immigration policy and programs in BC—on expanded engagement strategies

within and between government ministries, and different levels of government, as well as with non-governmental organizations and academics, speaks to a new approach to governance. Jurisdictions are learning from each other to design innovative approaches and develop “best practices.”

After briefly outlining the historical development and demographic portrait of immigration and settlement in BC, we provide an overview of key actors in the provision of settlement services in the province. While the settlement service landscape has been evolving rapidly over the past few years, we conclude by outlining several concerns about program gaps, as well as the difficulty of evaluating the impact of programs.

## PART ONE: HISTORICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT OF IMMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT IN BC

In 2006, the population of British Columbia was 4.1 million, a 5.3 percent increase from that recorded in the 2001 Census (2006 Census).<sup>1</sup> BC is home to 13 percent of Canada’s population and receives an average of 16 percent of the immigrants arriving in Canada every year. British Columbia has four Central Metropolitan Areas (CMAs), which together account for 67 percent of its population. Vancouver, the third largest city in Canada, has a population of 2.1 million, slightly more than half of the provincial total. The other CMAs in the province are: Victoria, home to 330,088 people; Kelowna, with 162,276; and Abbotsford, with 159,020. Recent immigrants to BC disproportionately settle within the Lower Mainland region: 80 percent of all immigrants and 90 percent of recent immigrants live in the Metro Vancouver and adjacent Abbotsford metropolitan areas, compared with 59 percent of the total population of BC (MIB 2008a).

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, demographic information draws upon 2006 Census data.

The size and profile of British Columbia's foreign-born population has undergone a significant transformation over the last twenty years. Over one-quarter (27.5 percent) of British Columbians are foreign born (up from 21.9 percent in 1986). As might be expected given its location, BC receives a much higher proportion of its newcomers from Asia and the Pacific, and a much lower proportion of immigrants from South and Central America, than do other provinces. Mainland China, India and the Philippines remained the top three source countries for immigrants to BC in 2007, though the list of important source countries also includes Iran, South Korea, and the United Kingdom (IPI 2008). Increased migration from Asian countries has significantly altered the ethno-cultural composition of the province over the last two decades. Unlike those of British Isles or European descent, the majority of whom are Canadian-born or have lived in Canada for a number of decades, over 70 percent of those reporting Chinese and East Indian origins were born outside Canada (Statistics Canada 2008; MIB 2008b).

British Columbians identified over two hundred ethnic origins in the 2006 Census, reflecting a mixture of current and historical immigration trends (MIB 2008b; Statistics Canada 2008). The rise in migration from non-European countries has resulted in a considerable increase in the proportion of BC's population identifying as a member of a visible minority group, from 21.6 percent in 2001 to 24.8 in 2006 (Statistics Canada 2008). British Columbia's visible minority population exceeded 1 million in the 2006 Census, an increase from 836,400 in 2001. The vast majority of this group (86.8 percent in 2006) lives in Metro Vancouver (Statistics Canada 2008; MIB 2008b). The top three visible minority groups in BC—Chinese, South Asian and Filipino—are predominantly foreign born, with many having arrived since 2001.

In 2007, almost 70 percent of adult immigrants to BC (aged 15 and over) arrived with official language proficiency (MIB 2008b). Conversely, approximately 15 percent of recent immigrants report no English language ability upon arrival (BC Stats 2008a). While the language ability of newcomers remains high overall, it varies significantly between immigration admission classes. Official language proficiency is highest among those entering as Live-In Caregivers and Skilled Workers (89 and 82 percent, respectively) and lowest among refugees (under 33 percent) (IPI 2008).

The profile of recent immigrants continues to be younger than the total BC population, with over half of those arriving between 2001 and 2006 in the 25-to-54-year-old age group (IPI 2008; BC Stats 2008a). New immigrants are typically better educated than the native-born population; over 70 percent possess some form of university degree or other post-secondary training.<sup>2</sup> Yet, lagging immigrant incomes and higher unemployment rates (compared with the Canadian-born population) are among the challenges facing immigrants in BC today (IPI 2008). Immigrants in British Columbia continue to earn less than their Canadian-born counterparts regardless of gender or level of education, and the situation is especially troubling for those with university degrees.

Labour force participation and employment rates of immigrants in British Columbia are lower than the total population. In 2006, recent immigrants had an unemployment rate of 11 percent, compared to 7 percent for those arriving prior to 2001 and 5 percent for the non-immigrant population (Vancouver Foundation 2008). The combination of lower labour force participation and employment rates with lower earnings means that immigrants in BC have a higher prevalence of low income than the total population: 23.4 and 17.8 per-

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<sup>2</sup> Education levels are highest among those arriving in the Skilled Worker and Provincial Nominee Programs and lowest among refugees to BC (IPI 2008).

cent for before- and after- tax measures, as compared with 17.3 and 13.1 percent, respectively, for the provincial population as a whole (BC Stats, n.d.).

### *Settlement patterns*

As noted, British Columbia's foreign-born population is overwhelmingly concentrated in the Vancouver and Abbotsford metropolitan areas. While the dominance of Vancouver as the primary destination of newcomers to BC remains strong, the period from 2004 to 2007 witnessed an increase in the number of recent immigrants bypassing Vancouver to settle in Abbotsford. Approximately four in ten residents of Vancouver and Abbotsford are foreign-born, compared with 27.5 percent of all British Columbians and 19.8 percent of the population of Canada as a whole (MIB 2008c). Moreover, recent immigrants represent 7 percent of the population of Vancouver and Abbotsford, compared with 4.4 percent of the population of all British Columbia and 3.6 percent of the population of Canada. As with the province as a whole, just over half of all immigrants in the Lower Mainland arrived between 1991 and 2006 (Vancouver Foundation 2008; MIB 2008a). China, India, the Philippines, and South Korea are the top four source countries for recent immigrants to Vancouver.

In 2006, nearly three-quarters of recent immigrants in Metro Vancouver lived in four municipalities: the City of Vancouver, Richmond, Burnaby and Surrey. In contrast to the historical dominance of the City of Vancouver as the primary point of reception, by 2006 only 28.7 percent of newcomers lived in that municipality, while 46 percent were located in the other three aforementioned municipalities. Over the last five years, Surrey has reported the most rapid growth in foreign-born persons of all Canadian cities (BC Stats 2008a).

Between 2001 and 2006, for example, the foreign-born population in Surrey increased by over 30 percent.

The social geography of visible minority groups within Vancouver and Abbotsford has become increasingly complex over the last two decades. Members of visible minority groups account for 41.7 percent of Metro Vancouver's population (or 40.9 percent of the Vancouver-Abbotsford population, combined). Actually, more than half of the residents of three municipalities identify as visible minorities: Richmond (65.1 percent), Burnaby (55.4 percent) and the City of Vancouver (51.0 percent) (MIB 2008b). In Abbotsford, this is the case for 22.8 percent of the population, with nearly three-quarters of this group tracing their ancestry to South Asia.

While the Kelowna and Victoria metropolitan areas both have sizeable immigrant populations (15 and 19 percent, respectively), these immigrants are more likely to report having arrived prior to 1991 (75 percent) and are less likely to identify as a member of a visible minority group (5 and 10 percent, respectively). On average, immigrants in Victoria and Kelowna fare better economically than their counterparts in Vancouver and Abbotsford, as well as British Columbia as a whole. In Vancouver, immigrants earned approximately two-thirds that of the Canadian-born population, regardless of whether or not they had a university degree (Hiebert 2009). While immigrants have settled across British Columbia, the continued concentration of the foreign-born and visible minority populations within Metro Vancouver and Abbotsford means that the remainder of our analysis will be limited to the Lower Mainland region.

## PART TWO: WHO'S WHO IN SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION IN BC

This section focuses upon the key actors in immigrant integration and settlement in British Columbia. These include federal, provincial and municipal governments, as well as organizations such as the United Way and the Vancouver Foundation. The provision of settlement services is frequently done through Immigrant Serving Agencies (ISAs), multicultural or ethno-specific organizations, or educational institutions.

### *i) Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments*

Jurisdiction over immigration in Canada has always been complicated. The British North America Act, which established the legal foundations of the nation state, specified that immigration would be regulated by the federal and provincial governments jointly. In practice, for most of Canadian history, the federal government has taken the lead and has set admission levels (in consultation with provinces and territories), defined admission procedures, managed the admission system, and administered integration programs. Provincial governments have always been involved in the provision of “regular” services to immigrants, just as they do for the population as a whole. Immigrants are therefore eligible for provincial health-care programs, public education for their children (a municipal service supported by funds from the provincial government), etc.<sup>3</sup> In effect, the federal government has played the active role in immigration while provincial governments played passive roles.

This jurisdictional configuration has been redefined over the past generation. Beginning with the Cullen-Couture Agreement (also known as the

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<sup>3</sup> All provincial services are available to permanent residents, but temporary residents can only gain access to a selected number of them.

Canada-Québec Accord) of 1991, some of the federal responsibilities for immigration have been devolved to provinces. The particular instrument relevant for this discussion is the Agreement for Canada-British Columbia Cooperation on Immigration (CBCCI), first signed in 1998, renewed in 2004, and under renegotiation as we write (CIC 2004a, 2004b). Among other things, the CBCCI enables British Columbia to intervene in the immigrant selection process through a Provincial Nominee Program, which was initiated in 2001. In this case the provincial government can “fast-track” immigrants that it considers particularly desirable (i.e., important to the economic development of the province) by nominating them for immediate processing by the federal government, under admission rules defined by British Columbia.

The CBCCI also devolves responsibility for most integration services to the provincial government, based upon a transfer of funding from Ottawa to Victoria.<sup>4</sup> This was a significant departure from previous practice and gives the province a much more active role in the immigration process. The provincial government, guided by its responsibilities as outlined in the CBCCI, defines the package of services that will be provided for newcomers to British Columbia. These are coordinated by WelcomeBC, an umbrella initiative that includes oversight for multiculturalism, anti-racism programming, the Welcoming and Inclusive Workplaces Program (WICWP), and the provision of settlement services.

Before outlining these services, there is one important qualification that must be noted. The federal government retains its responsibility to facilitate

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<sup>4</sup> There is controversy over the allocation of these funds. The government of British Columbia allocates some of these funds to its general revenue, under the assumption that newcomers use general services such as health and education. It dedicates approximately half of the funds transferred from Ottawa to ISAP. Advocates argue that this ratio should be higher. A good introduction to this debate can be found in statements made to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, Evidence Number 46, Vancouver, BC, February 19, 2003.

the settlement and integration of Government Assisted Refugees (GARs). More precisely, this means that the federal government continues to administer the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), which helps GARs in several ways, most notably in the provision of a basic income for the first year of their life in Canada that is meant to approximate the amount of money received by a recipient of the provincial social assistance system. Beyond RAP, refugees are expected to use the services offered to all immigrants, such as language training or general orientation services. Also, once the period of RAP funding has been completed, responsibility for the well-being of refugees shifts to the province.

The BC Government administers three key programs with respect to immigrant settlement and multiculturalism programs:

- BC Settlement and Adaptation Program (BCSAP);
- BC Anti-Racism and Multiculturalism Program (BCAMP); and
- Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program (WICWP).

Each of these will be addressed in turn.

#### The BC Settlement and Adaptation Program (BCSAP)

The provincial government makes arrangements with non-government organizations and educational institutions to provide direct services to newcomers during their first three years in Canada. Under the auspices of the British Columbia Settlement and Adaptation Program (BCSAP), the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development (ALMD) contracts non-governmental organizations and educational institutions to deliver direct

services to newcomers.<sup>5</sup> The full range of services provided by non-government organizations (Immigrant Serving Agencies, or ISAs) supported through BCSAP funds, is very extensive and beyond the scope of this paper. Rather than itemize them in detail, it is more relevant to understand the general nature of these services. BCSAP supports four streams of services:

- ISAs and school boards provide “Information and Support Services,” either in the offices of ISAs or in schools. These services include orientation information, referral to mainstream services when appropriate, and a variety of other types of support. In essence, ISAs or school boards help individual immigrants, mainly through counselors.
- ISAs coordinate “Community Bridging Services.” These mainly revolve around the Host Program that seeks to match people with experience living in Canada (which could mean people born in Canada or immigrants who arrived some time ago) with newcomers. The aim of this service is to help newcomers indirectly, through people who “know the ropes.” From a sociological perspective, it can be thought of as a way to widen the network of acquaintances of newcomers and thereby enhance their social capital.
- Language training is offered through the “English Language Services for Adults” (ELSA) program. This training is provided by a variety of educational institutions, some of which have been established by and continue to be managed by ISAs. In order to reduce barriers to access, many of the third party organizations also provide free on-site child minding for dependent pre-school aged children of ELSA learners. Note that children are expected to receive language training in the school system, either in regular or special

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<sup>5</sup> Temporary residents are not eligible to access BCSAP programs and services.

ESL classes. Also note that ELSA programs combine language education with a broader introduction to Canada that includes information on how the labour market operates. Funding increases have enabled the provision of additional classes and ensured timely access to ELSA classes.<sup>6</sup>

- Finally, BCSAP allocates some of its funds for “Sectoral Support and Delivery Assistance.” This last category includes support for special initiatives that could enhance service delivery in one or more of the other streams, plus financial aid for coordination among ISAs. Sectoral support for settlement and multiculturalism agencies and English language services are provided by the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Services Agencies of BC (AMSSA) and the English Language Services for Adults Network (ELSA Net) respectively, while the British Columbia Immigrant Employment Council (BCIEC) will provide sectoral support on labour market initiatives.

In 2005, in the midst of a period of profound fiscal restraint, \$22 million was dedicated to BCSAP, at a time when BC received a little over forty thousand immigrants. This suggests a per capita funding base at that time of about \$550 per person. That is, while the list of programs is impressive, and their intent is certainly laudable, the actual resource base of BCSAP has been quite modest considering the scale of issues faced by immigrants who have come from all over the world, with many languages, educational backgrounds, cultural sensibilities, and so on. Note, however, that the level of funding for BCSAP has increased sharply in the last few years, to \$70 million in 2008-2009.<sup>7</sup> A number of new programs are being introduced in light of this added funding. For example, settlement workers have been placed in schools to as-

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<sup>6</sup> Multi-barriered individuals who require additional assistance may access blended services offering “Information, Support and English Language Services”.

<sup>7</sup> This figure was provided by a senior official of the relevant ministry in the Government of British Columbia, in a personal conversation held in November 2008.

sist immigrant families in adjusting to school culture and facilitate integration into the broader community. The Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program, launched in 2007 and expanded in 2008, encompasses twenty school districts across British Columbia and received total funding of \$8.6 million for the 2008-2009 school year. A similar program is being considered for public libraries. English language programs are being augmented. Targeted programs are also in pilot stages for refugee children, francophone immigrants, and special services for immigrant seniors. The Step Ahead: Settlement Enhancement Project, for example, is a two-year pilot program that provides in-home services to newcomers facing multiple barriers to settlement. It is too soon, of course, to evaluate the impact of these enhancements and new initiatives. In keeping with the neoliberal ideology discussed at the outset of the paper, BCSAP funds are allocated through a competitive process, where the government issues Requests for Proposals and ranks the applications that are submitted by ISAs for their quality and economic efficiency. Two parts of the British Columbia government are involved in immigration directly, and almost every branch indirectly (e.g., health, education, justice). The CBCCI is negotiated by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development (ALMD), which also administers BCSAP funds and the Provincial Nominee Program.<sup>8</sup> The Ministry of Attorney General (MAG) is responsible for multiculturalism and plays a leading role in anti-racism initiatives.

It is important to understand that immigrants are not required to use the services available to them. All of the programs described here are optional rather than mandatory.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The 2008 reorganization of the Immigration Initiatives Branch (IPI) and the Immigration Policy and Initiatives Branch (IPI) into ALMD brought immigration, concern with employment, and labour market and international recruitment (e.g., Provincial Nominee Program) under the mandate of one ministry.

<sup>9</sup> This is in contrast to a number of European countries, which have made participation in settlement programs mandatory for immigrants who wish to renew their visas.

## The BC Anti-Racism and Multiculturalism Program (BCAMP)

The primary goal of the BC Anti-racism and Multiculturalism Program is the prevention and elimination of racism through enhanced community understanding of cultural diversity and multiculturalism. Funding is available through:

- Grants to organizations for projects to promote anti-racism and multiculturalism (e.g., cross-cultural dialogues, education programs);
- Community funding to respond to racism and hate activities (e.g., the Critical Incident Response Model); and
- Grants for supporting anti-racism and multiculturalism initiatives.

In 2007-2008 over \$475,000 of WelcomeBC funding was awarded to twenty projects across BC (e.g., Terrace, Kelowna, Duncan, Campbell River and the Lower Mainland) to promote multiculturalism and anti-racism initiatives through enhancing community understanding. Of these, over \$270,000 went to support youth initiatives (MAG 2008). The November 2006 provision of increased federal funding enabled the province to provide approximately \$1 million to organizations in order to support anti-racism and multiculturalism programs (MAG 2006). Arguably, though, the resources dedicated to BCAMP remain limited given the scale of the issues involved, revealing the priority placed upon newcomers and, more recently, the capacity of the host society to welcome immigrants.

## The Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program (WICWP)

Successful integration is an important prerequisite for social cohesion and requires the establishment of welcoming and inclusive communities and workplaces. The government can only do so much to help immigrants integrate, and the process is limited by the degree of accommodation offered by society at large. Community capacity to support and include immigrants varies significantly across the province. More resources exist within places like Vancouver and Surrey; however, the settlement of immigrants outside these areas suggests that a broader approach to community engagement is advisable.

The Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program (WICWP) represents the keystone of BC's evolving approach to settlement (IIB 2009). It is comprised of four community-level program components, as well as a number of ministry-led initiatives.

- *Community Partnership Development* aids communities in identifying and coordinating collaborative relationships and sustainable partnerships with key stakeholders and diverse groups in order to promote welcoming and inclusive communities.
- *Knowledge Development and Exchange* facilitates the ability of communities to promote knowledge development and sharing among stakeholders, diverse groups, and community members more broadly.
- Assistance in *Public Education* is provided to enable communities to facilitate cross-cultural understanding and increase public awareness (e.g., through the distribution of materials, toolkits, resources, etc.).
- Finally, through the WICWP program, communities, stakeholders, and other groups may gain support in designing, implementing, delivering, and

evaluating *Demonstration Projects* that promote innovative approaches to fostering a more welcoming environment for newcomers.

Additional ministry-led initiatives under the WICWP program include:

- A research component that seeks to identify gaps in literature and policy;
- Sectoral partnerships to promote workplace diversity and create culturally competent workplaces; and
- An Inter-Governmental Engagement Initiative that enables government staff from all levels of government to exchange ideas on welcoming and inclusive communities.

#### Non-BCSAP programs

Although the majority of programs and services for newcomers are supported through BCSAP, additional funding is provided through federal (e.g., Service Canada; Canadian Heritage, HRSDC, Western Economic Diversification Canada) and provincial (e.g., BC Ministry of Children and Family Development; Ministry of Economic Development) government ministries. According to an estimate made by a source from the settlement sector, 37 percent of non-BCSAP services for newcomers are funded by the provincial government; 29 percent by charity and community foundations; 23 percent by the federal government; 8 percent by private donations; and 3 percent by municipal governments (Charles et al. 2008). A wide range of programs are funded, including community and business development programs, employment and skills training, and health promotion. Municipal governments play a more indirect role. They offer services that immigrants consume just like other residents, such as parks, libraries, public transportation, and education. Dedicated programs for newcomers are predominantly found in Metro Vancouver and include

initiatives aimed at women, refugee claimants, youth, and families, as well as more general community development. In addition, each of the municipalities that comprise Metro Vancouver, especially the larger ones, have appointed social planners who specialize in working with diverse groups and who attempt to ensure that there is good communication between these communities and municipal government. Some have been more proactive, including the City of Vancouver and the City of Surrey, which we highlight here. However, it is important to remember that the scope of initiatives targeting integration is increasing in many municipalities, in part led by funds becoming available through the WICWP program.

The City of Vancouver, for example, has established special task forces on diversity and immigration. The latter body, the Mayor's Task Force on Immigration, has recently released a report that includes recommendations to improve the connection between immigrants and the civic government. Accordingly, in late 2008 the City hosted a Summit on Immigration and Employment in an effort to encourage local employers to value the skills and pre-migration labour market experience of immigrants more highly.

In addition, the City of Vancouver provides financial support to non-profit organizations in Vancouver through its Community Services Grant Program. While not all grants are specific to newcomers (the total amount supported was nearly \$2.9 million, Vernooy 2008), those awarded in 2008 include:

- Inland Refugee Society of BC (\$51,764),
- MOSAIC (Community Development, \$70,000),
- MOSAIC/Strathcona (Vietnamese Family Counselling Project, \$53,000),
- PIRS Outreach Workers (\$53,128),

- SUCCESS (Bridging the Gap Family Services Advocacy, \$45,900), and
- SUCCESS (Youth at Risk Program, \$60,000).

Surrey's Social Plan (adopted in 2006), which identified diversity as one of the five areas requiring consideration, and the multicultural advisory committee established in 2007, speaks to the active efforts of the City of Surrey in responding to changing population needs. The introduction of the WICWP initiative has prompted Surrey politicians to bring together stakeholders to consider how to make Surrey more welcoming for newcomers. Similar to the City of Vancouver, Surrey has also made funding for non-profit groups or organizations available through the Surrey Community Grants Program.

#### *ii) Universal Service Providers*

Charity and community foundations represent the second and third largest sources of funding for newcomers after the provincial government. In Metro Vancouver, programs and services supported by these institutions include drop-in programs (e.g., for preschoolers, children, youth, seniors and women), family support, and community outreach programs. While some, including the United Way of the Lower Mainland and various community foundations, award grants to those providing services and programs, others, including the Red Cross of the Lower Mainland, deliver immigrant- and refugee-specific programs more directly.

#### United Way of the Lower Mainland

The United Way of the Lower Mainland (UWLM) is the largest organization supporting community programs and services in British Columbia. Recognizing that communities undergoing rapid growth through migration may lack suf-

efficient resources and programs to facilitate integration, the UWLM has designated Immigrant and Newcomer Integration as a targeted priority area. The UWLM supports the delivery of culturally competent programs that promote accessibility to mainstream services; facilitates capacity building among service providers and other stakeholders; and funds research on newcomer populations.

In 2007, the UWLM awarded twenty-two grants worth a total of \$787,976 to this end, including:

Strong Beginnings: Building an Integrated & Inclusive Learning Community (Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House, \$70,000);

Community Capacity Building for Newcomers, Multi-purpose Agencies and Public Institutions in the Tri-Cities (MOSAIC, \$70,000).

Two other projects of note, the Burnaby Newcomer Planning Table (Burnaby Family Life Institute, \$35,000) and the North Shore Newcomer Service Planning Table (North Shore Multicultural Society, \$35,000) seek to develop concrete plans among multiple stakeholders that will see them work together in establishing more inclusive communities.

The Vancouver Foundation<sup>10</sup>

The Vancouver Foundation is another organization that contributes grants to youth and community development programs throughout Metro Vancouver, including youth training and peer support and early childhood-focused settlement programs. As with UWLM grants, those provided by the Vancouver Foundation are frequently geared towards assisting newcomers, including

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<sup>10</sup> In light of the current global financial uncertainty, both the Vancouver and Surrey Foundations have suspended their 2009 Calls for Proposals.

those who have been in Vancouver for a number of years, to transition to mainstream services. Awards in 2007 included:

- Bus passes for immigrants and refugees, as well as at-risk and homeless youth (Five organizations in the Lower Mainland, including ISSofBC, \$83,000);
- First Contact Program (Canadian Red Cross, \$40,000);
- Enhanced Parenting and Family Literacy Program for ESL Families (Pacific Immigrant Resources Society, \$69,000);
- Multicultural Youth Circle Program (MY Circle) (ISSofBC, \$90,000 over three years);
- Illustrated Journey Youth Project (La Boussole, \$50,000);
- First Steps ECD Refugee Settlement Project (School District #36 Surrey, \$45,000); and
- Grade 8 Immigrant Youth At Risk (School District #41 Burnaby, \$35,000).

#### The Surrey Foundation

Successful integration of immigrants into Surrey is one of four priority areas for the Surrey Foundation (Surrey Foundation 2009). Grants awarded by the Surrey Foundation in 2008 that directly benefit immigrants and refugees included:

- Women Without Permanent Status in Canada (YWCA of Vancouver, \$75,000); and the

- First Contact Project (Canadian Red Cross Society Lower Mainland Region, \$130,000).

#### Red Cross of the Lower Mainland (RCLM)

The RCLM oversees a number of programs and services to facilitate integration and increase community understanding.

- The First Contact Refugee Claimant Reception Program is headed by the Canadian Red Cross in partnership with Settlement Orientation Services (SOS) and Inland Refugee Society (IRS). Drawing upon a multi-agency partnership of federal and provincial government ministries, NGOs, churches, and housing providers, First Contact provides basic information (in first languages) about food, shelter, and medical care to newly arrived refugee claimants. Funding for First Contact has been obtained from a variety of sources, including the Vancouver Foundation, the Law Foundation of BC, the VanCity Community Foundation, the United Way of the Lower Mainland, the Government of BC, and the Canadian Red Cross.
- “A Story to Tell and a Place for the Telling” is a dialogue series organized by the Red Cross of the Lower Mainland, featuring refugee stories and panel discussions on refugee issues. These dialogues, which are held in Vancouver and open to the public at no charge, seek to promote community understanding of the challenges faced by refugees.
- Smart Start programs offer first-aid classes to vulnerable communities in order to build capacity to deal with emergency situations. The programs are delivered in eighteen languages and are available at no charge.

On a smaller scale, the VanCity Community Foundation, in partnership with MOSAIC, supports a Micro-Loans Program that facilitates access to capital in

order to enable for low-income earners and newly arrived immigrants to start their own home-based business, or to acquire certification and skills training.

### *iii) Immigrant Serving Agencies (ISAs)*

There are dozens of non-profit immigrant serving agencies (ISAs) in metropolitan Vancouver, but four are particularly comprehensive and significant: DIVERSEcity; ISSofBC; MOSAIC; and SUCCESS. Each provides a wide range of programs that are financed by BCSAP as well as funds from other sources. Each has a cadre of settlement counselors who, collectively, are capable of interacting with clients in many languages. Each is also able to draw upon an extensive network of volunteers to provide services beyond those funded by BCSAP. All four agencies have multiple service sites in the Vancouver region, and in other parts of British Columbia, and all are members of AMSSA, the umbrella organization of multicultural and immigrant serving agencies.

#### DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society

DIVERSEcity offers employment services programs, settlement services, English language training, and family services. In addition, DIVERSEcity is home to the New Canadian Clinic, which seeks to meet the health care needs of government-assisted refugees. DIVERSEcity operates with funding from the federal and provincial governments, the BC Gaming Commission, the UWLM and other foundations, and fundraising, as well as fee-for-service programs.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Data were obtained from DIVERSEcity's 2007-2008 Annual Report. Unfortunately the report did not specify the breakdown of individual funding sources.

### Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (ISSofBC)

In addition to settlement services and employment and language training programs for immigrants and refugees, ISSofBC provides orientation services and temporary accommodation for government-assisted refugees. It is also the lead agency in the Refugee Trauma Program, launched in 2008, which provides mental health assistance to refugees. ISSofBC operates with funding from all levels of government, the UWLM, and other miscellaneous contributors, and in 2008, received nearly \$10 million for its programs, a figure that accounted for over 80 percent of its total revenues. In 2007-2008, ISSofBC received 93 percent of its program funding from the provincial and federal governments.<sup>12</sup>

### MOSAIC

MOSAIC offers employment and English language training services, as well as programs geared towards family and settlement services. MOSAIC is the lead agency on the Step Ahead project and organizes job fairs for immigrants and refugees in Vancouver. Funding revenues are obtained from a wide variety of sources, including all three levels of government (79 percent), fee-for-service programs (14 percent), and other donations and foundations.<sup>13</sup>

### SUCCESS

SUCCESS has expanded its original mandate both beyond the Chinese-Canadian community and geographically. In addition to offices throughout Metro Vancouver, SUCCESS now offers services to newcomers to Fort St. John

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<sup>12</sup> Data were obtained from ISSofBC's 2007-2008 Annual Report.

<sup>13</sup> Data have been obtained from the MOSAIC 2007-2008 Annual Report.

(through the Northern BC Newcomer Integration Service Centre). Moreover, beginning in 2009, prospective immigrants to Canada will be able to access pre-landing settlement and employment services at SUCCESS offices in Seoul and Taipei. Total revenues for SUCCESS in 2007/2008 were \$26,108,775, of which almost 70 percent was obtained from the three levels of government.<sup>14</sup>

Beyond these large ISAs, there are many smaller ones that tend to focus on particular groups, such as refugee claimants or immigrants from Africa. In other words, there is a rich field of ISAs in metropolitan Vancouver, dedicated to assisting immigrants in a wide variety of ways.

#### *iv) Issue-Based NGOs*

A number of issue-based NGOs are working towards improved living and working conditions for immigrants and refugees in Vancouver and Abbotsford. Among them is the Tenants' Resource and Advisory Centre (TRAC), which seeks to promote affordable housing and tenant's rights in British Columbia. While not specific to immigrants and refugees, TRAC has been active in facilitating first-language access to their *Tenant Survival Guide (2006)* and *Tenants' Guide* (a condensed version of the *Tenant Survival Guide*) in fourteen non-official languages.

The Law Foundation of BC (LFBC), the Law Students' Legal Advice Program (with funding from the LFBC), and Access Justice (a non-profit society) partner with local ISAs, including ISSofBC, MOSAIC, and SUCCESS to provide legal assistance programs to immigrants throughout Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley.

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<sup>14</sup> Data obtained from the SUCCESS 2007-2008 Annual Report.

Finally, Justicia for Migrant Workers (J4MW) BC promotes the rights of migrant farm workers hired through the Low Skilled Workers Program (LSWP) and the Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (CSAW), as well as those of farm workers without status. Through research and political organizing, J4MW provides opportunities for migrant workers to speak without fear of repercussion, in addition to lobbying government for policy changes.

*v) Universities*

While colleges have played a vital role in offering ESL programs to newcomers, BC universities have acted in much more limited ways. Of course, they have long hosted international students who are in Canada on temporary visas. They also admit newcomers trying to upgrade their skills or credentials, as regular students. But none of them have adopted a more active role in the integration process. Moreover, other than supporting the Metropolis project, none have seen fit to establish significant teaching or research programs dealing with immigrant integration. The University of British Columbia is currently engaged in a review of its approach to diversity, but this is largely disconnected from a concern with immigration per se.

**PART THREE: MAJOR ISSUES/CHALLENGES FOR INTEGRATION AND SETTLEMENT IN BC**

The last five years has witnessed substantial improvement in the services and programs provided to immigrants and refugees in BC. An array of new pilot programs have been introduced, services in general have expanded, and there has been an overarching shift in the orientation of programs towards a more targeted, as opposed to universal, client base. In spite of these initiatives, challenges remain with respect to specific groups, issues of housing and income security, and finally the ability to assess the impact of changes made

to integration and settlement services. In light of the current economic climate, these challenges may become acute.

### Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs)

Thus far, we have discussed settlement and integration in British Columbia with a focus on permanent migrants. Yet, one of the largest challenges facing British Columbia today is associated with temporary migrants. While the number of permanent immigrants arriving in BC, and more broadly, Canada, declined in 2006 and again in 2007, the opposite is true for temporary residents (Ilves 2008). In 2006, the 42,084 new immigrants settling in the province was far surpassed by the arrival of 62,535 temporary migrants. More than one in five temporary foreign workers who arrived in Canada in 2006 settled in BC.

Temporary workers (and temporary work visas) represent an effective way for employers to meet short-term or regional skill and labour shortages. Unlike the immigration program, however, the government does not impose numerical limits or targets on the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP). Rather, employers can hire foreign workers as needed to fill vacancies for jobs deemed "occupations under pressure." The close connection between the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and the labour market is evident when considering settlement patterns. TFWs are more geographically dispersed than are immigrants to BC, with 40 percent living outside Metro Vancouver, compared with 15 percent of new immigrants (Ilves 2008). The number of TFWs in BC more than doubled between 1997 and 2006. The latest numbers indicate the flow of TFWs to BC in 2007 increased 79 percent over 2006, and we are sure to see an even larger number in 2008. Those entering represent

a diverse group of high- and low-skilled occupations, including live-in caregivers, seasonal agricultural workers, and high-tech workers.

Previous research demonstrates that “lower” skilled workers are vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination (see Pratt 2008). Programmatic restrictions that require live-in caregivers and seasonal agricultural workers to live and work on the employers’ property, for example, increase their vulnerability. Those in the skilled and professional classes face other challenges. Unlike lower skilled workers, skilled and professional migrants are permitted to bring their spouses and children to Canada. While the spouses and children of professional and skilled migrants are afforded access to health care and the K-12 school system, neither they nor the worker can access settlement services, including even the most basic of free English language classes.

The 2008 implementation of the Temporary Foreign Workers Outreach Project (TFWOP), which enabled twenty-five Immigrant Integration Coordinating Committee (IICC) member agencies to provide outreach and training workshops to TFWs and their employers throughout BC, is promising in this regard. The program, funded by the BC Ministry of Labour and Citizens’ Services, Employment Standards Branch, targets the diverse needs of TFWs and attempts to inform both TFWs and employers on their respective rights and responsibilities. While programs such as the TFWOP represent a promising new practice, we believe it is insufficient in light of the continued exclusion of TFWs from BCSAP services and programs, particularly given recent changes to the broader immigration program.

Until very recently, a strict delineation of permanent and temporary migration streams has been a cornerstone of Canada’s immigration program. Permanent migrants, as opposed to those on temporary visas, are provided with

access to settlement and integration services to facilitate their integration into Canadian communities. Yet, the expansion of the Temporary Foreign Workers Program in 2006 and the 2008 introduction of the Canadian Experience class (CEC) effectively establishes temporary migration as a pathway to permanent residency. Given the rapid expansion in TFW programs and the blurring of the permanent and temporary migration programs, the prohibition of TFWs and their families from settlement services ought to be reconsidered.

#### Underemployment and rising poverty among Immigrants and Refugees

The knowledge that the skills of newcomers in BC are underutilized is widespread. Some of the more significant challenges for meaningful labour market integration, in BC as elsewhere in Canada, are: **language barriers**, non-recognition of credentials obtained prior to landing in Canada, lack of familiarity with job-seeking practices in Canada, and a lack of Canadian work experience (e.g., Sherrell, Hyndman, and Preniqi 2005; Krahn et al. 2000). In spite of higher skill levels amongst immigrants arriving in BC, there is increasing poverty among newcomers. Underemployment is actually greatest among those with the highest levels of education, regardless of the sector in which they are seeking employment. The BC Immigrant Employment Council (BCIEC) was convened in the fall of 2008 and is dedicated to improving the match between the skills brought by immigrants and the labour market ([www.iecbc.ca](http://www.iecbc.ca)). It remains to be seen, however, whether this initiative will succeed.

#### Housing and newcomers

The majority of British Columbia's foreign-born population, particularly recent immigrants, have settled within Metro Vancouver's unforgiving housing

market. Housing prices that are amongst the most expensive in Canada are accompanied within the rental market by high rents, low vacancies, and a lack of purpose-built rental units. Although some immigrants arrive in Vancouver with substantial savings and move quickly into homeownership (see Hiebert, Mendez, and Wyly 2008; Hiebert and Mendez 2008), others face significant challenges in obtaining adequate and affordable housing (see Sherrell and ISSofBC 2009; Francis 2009; Sherrell 2008; Hiebert, D'Addario, and Sherrell 2005). In Vancouver, homeownership rates among newcomers are higher than may be expected by their low incomes, something Hiebert et al. (2008) attribute to the decision to allocate a significant proportion of the household income to housing and/or wealth transferred from abroad. Ley's (1999) analysis reveals that homeownership may be accomplished by combining the incomes of a number of adult income earners, in effect substituting bodies for capital.

Research shows today's newcomers are more likely to experience low incomes and high levels of poverty (Picot 2004). The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation defines housing affordability in relative terms, when a household allocates 30 percent or less of its gross income to shelter. Immigrants and refugees frequently allocate a far higher ratio, in many cases well over 50 percent (Hiebert and Mendez 2008; Murdie 2008, 2004; Hiebert, D'Addario, and Sherrell 2005; Zine 2003).

Yet housing is not one of the core services provided to immigrants under the BCSAP funding envelope. We believe this decision should be re-evaluated. Newcomers with low incomes and precarious legal status face an especially high risk of exploitation.

## Refugee issues

The 2002 implementation of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) led to sweeping change in the profile of Government Assisted Refugees arriving in Canada: since then, a greater priority has been given to those in need of immediate protection rather than the earlier emphasis on “ability to establish.” Beginning in 2003, when the first post-IRPA GARs landed in Canada, the profile of GARs has included more multi-barriered individuals, including those with low literacy levels in their original languages and significant physical and mental health issues, as well as increased numbers of single-headed households, large households, and a much higher number of children and youth who were born and raised in refugee camps with limited exposure to formal education.

Given these emerging needs, there have been changes in the provision of services for GARs in BC. Beginning in April 2007, ISSofBC introduced extended orientation programming that includes ongoing monitoring and follow-up of clients throughout the first year. There have also been a number of pilot projects introduced, which include:

- Step Ahead: Settlement Enhancement Project, which provides outreach to multi-barriered refugee households;
- Trauma Information and Support Services, which assists GARs and refugee claimants in Vancouver and Burnaby; and
- Targeted Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs, including the First Steps ECD Refugee Settlement Projects in Surrey and Burnaby, which involve integrated, multi-agency service delivery to refugee children and their caregivers in order to provide settlement and developmental supports.

But these new initiatives take place against the backdrop of major funding challenges. Significantly, funds for the Resettlement Adaptation Program (RAP) have been frozen since 1998, despite the much greater need associated with the new GAR population. Also, it remains to be seen whether the pilot programs will receive continuing funding. The conclusions of several recent research projects undertaken in Metro Vancouver all point to the difficulties faced by refugee newcomers (Sherrell and ISSofBC 2009; Francis 2009; Sherrell et al. 2007; McLean, Friesen, and Hyndman 2006; Cubie 2006). In other words, even with all this effort, the configuration of refugee resettlement programs has yet to be perfected.

#### Tracking changes, measuring outcomes

As we have seen, there has been considerable development in the type and extent of services available to newcomers in BC. Enhanced programming, new pilot projects and heightened concern about settlement and integration are promising. Yet, there are major data lags and gaps, and the scale of research within government agencies remains limited, especially considering the injection of new funding. Unfortunately, vital administrative data is held by a variety of ministries (e.g., health, housing, education, immigration), and linking these files is very difficult in an age of privacy concerns. The assessment of new programs is also anything but straightforward. Can WICWP actually improve community readiness for newcomers across the province, for example? Can improved attitudes be engineered? How would we measure attitudinal shifts? What is the impact of the of settlement workers in schools? Do settlement workers in libraries help? These potentially important initiatives

are being made in an atmosphere of austerity that is sure to be intensified given the current recession and the inevitable budget cuts ahead. There will be intense scrutiny of these programs, and it is unclear whether there are sufficient data to provide a business case strong enough to maintain them.

#### PART FOUR: CONCLUSION

We conclude by returning to the conceptual issues raised at the outset of the paper: the nature of social policy (in this case on newcomer integration) in a neoliberal climate and the role of government and society in the integration process. The imposition of neoliberal values on the settlement and integration sector, nearly a decade ago, led to a situation best described by a senior provincial bureaucrat (name withheld) as “managing down.” That is, in the early to mid-2000s, the envelope of funding available for these services fell in per capita terms. The dramatic shift to a more competitive bidding process for NGOs arguably exacerbated an already charged situation.

How can we reconcile this gloomy perspective with the larger story of this analysis, which has been about the effervescence of new programs in the past five years? The answer lies in a curious and awkward convergence of two “layers” of neoliberalism. Since 2005, transfers from the federal to the provincial government, as part of the CBCCI, have expanded substantially as the per capita funding base for settlement has been made more uniform across Canada (in other words, BC was not receiving a fair share of this funding until recently, particularly when compared with Québec). Under its own ideology of neoliberalism, the federal government made accountability a key ingredient in the expansion of these transfer payments. To receive more money, BC has been required to spend the extra amount on settlement services and to show that it has done so. Despite the austerity of the day, therefore, spending in

the area of settlement effectively tripled. The provincial ministry responsible for immigrant integration knew there were needs and received more money to address them, money that was protected from one layer of neoliberalism (the provincial) by another (the federal). They set about doing so, in partnership with NGOs, targeting their efforts to areas of particular need.

But this positive situation may not have a happy ending. We have yet to see the response of the federal government to the mounting deficit that has arisen in the current recession. Cuts in integration funding are certainly within the realm of possibility. In that case, the BC government will almost certainly follow suit and reduce its own commitment to this area. Given the large number of pilot programs, there is much flexibility in spending regimes that will, unfortunately, enable the imposition of reduced funding. As noted, the paucity of data on settlement means that it will be difficult to build an effective case to protect settlement programs if such a scenario emerges.

Secondly, how have these recent developments changed the overall configuration of integration policy? We introduced four types of policy earlier in this paper: no support for integration; limited and specific support; a whole-of-government approach; and a whole-of-society approach. Clearly, the age of “no support” ended long ago in BC, as elsewhere in Canada. For the most part, since the 1970s we have seen the evolution of our second type of policy regime in BC, with a limited part of the provincial government responsible for newcomer integration. Over the years, the location of the relevant department(s) within government has changed, of course, but the scope of interest within government as a whole has been limited. In fact, we would argue that a fully coordinated approach to integration, with program and data sharing across all of the ministries dealing with social policy, remains an elusive goal.

But at least some of the “restless” policy initiatives of the past half-decade have incorporated elements of what we have called the third and fourth policy regimes. For example, on the issue of refugees, the need for coordination across the fields of immigrant services, health, and social welfare is increasingly understood (as is the need for greater communication and collaboration between the three orders of government and the NGO community). So the contours of a whole-of-government approach are becoming discernable in that area, though much remains to be done in this respect.

Within this broader context, the WICWP program is perhaps the most interesting of all, since it is the first attempt of policy experimentation in the fourth type of regime. WICWP is based on the belief that society must prepare itself for newcomers, which involves engagement with a much wider array of partners than ever before. WICWP seeks to reach out to institutions that were once considered far removed from the issue of newcomer integration, such as Rotary Clubs, Girl Guides, and the private sector more generally, just to name a few examples. Further, WICWP has the goal of educating the public about the importance of immigration and thereby improving attitudes to newcomers across society. As such, it is a far-reaching and bold initiative.

We are not arguing that a secular shift in the nature of integration policy in BC has already occurred but that recent developments indicate such a shift, i.e., towards a “whole of government” approach that would also challenge society to become more welcoming, could be possible. In the current economic climate, however, the likelihood of such a positive outcome is probably small. The more important question in the foreseeable future will be to justify already-existing programs, rather than imagine and implement even better ones.

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