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An Assessment of the Role Community Services Play in the Attraction and Retention of Immigrants in South Okanagan

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Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Diversity

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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE COMMUNITY SERVICES PLAY IN THE ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF IMMIGRANTS IN SOUTH OKANAGAN

Wolfgang Depner

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 OPENING REMARKS

This report describes the process and results of research into the state of community services that reach and support various immigrant populations[1] living in smaller urban communities and in remote and rural areas in the South Okanagan, a region located in the Southern Interior of British Columbia. For the purpose of this study, the term South Okanagan refers to the region that includes the communities of Summerland, Penticton, Oliver and Osoyoos. This research did not consider the nearby Similkameen Valley due to time constraints. The author conducted this research under the academic supervision of Dr. Carlos Teixeira, associate professor at the University of British Columbia-Okanagan, on behalf of the South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services (SOICS), and in cooperation with SOICS funding partner Metropolis British Columbia through the Accelerate B.C. MITACS Graduate Research Internship Program

1.2 RESEARCH GOALS

This research pursued the following goals: first, it sought to identify gaps in the delivery of services to immigrant populations living in the South Okanagan; second, it sought to develop recommendations that would remedy identified service gaps with the understanding that the relevant stakeholders would receive the findings of this report for consideration and eventual implementation. Finally, this research agenda unfolded against the background of

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1 This report has adopted the definition of immigrant as developed by the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of British Columbia (AMSSA). All future references to 'immigrants' in this report therefore include immigrants and refugees from designated classes in all categories, as well as refugee claimants and live-in caregivers 'deemed eligible' for landing in Canada (AMSSA 2008). The report will reference other migrant groups whenever appropriate.

a broader query: what role do community services play in the successful attraction and retention of permanent immigrants to areas such as the South Okanagan? The region (like other rural parts of British Columbia) confronts the prospect of demographic and economic decline. This dynamic has in turn inspired various stakeholders to probe the possibilities and prospects of regionalizing immigration into the South Okanagan.

In this context, this project builds on research done inside and outside of British Columbia (Tamang 2010; Zehtab-Martin and Beesley 2007; Walton-Roberts 2005) in responding to a data gap, which Nolin, McCallum, and Zehtab-Martin (2009) had identified. As Nolin et al. (2009) note, the geography of social provision ranks among the "key areas of inquiry" as immigration patterns continue to re-shape, even "polarize" the social geography of Canada (Nolin et al. 2009, 6). Yet service providers (along with others) are struggling to understand this emerging landscape, because much of the available research concentrates on the major urban centres of Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver as they attract almost 70 per cent of new arrivals (Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin 2009; Radford 2007; Walton-Roberts 2005).

1.3 REPORT STRUCTURE

This report will unfold in the following manner. It will first describe its methodology. The author, by way of preview, organized one-on-one interviews and focus groups with recent and more settled immigrants living throughout the South Okanagan. The author also interviewed community leaders such as municipal politicians, local entrepreneurs, and service providers in four South Okanagan communities: Summerland, Penticton, Oliver and Osoyoos. The third section of this report will describe the broader background against which this particular research project unfolded. This section of the report will,

among other elements, include a review of the relevant literature and offer a profile of the research area, which according to several stakeholders could benefit from an influx of immigrants as it faces a number of economic and demographic challenges.

The fourth major section of this report will outline the central findings of this research project. It will find that the delivery of community services continues to improve as stakeholders inside and outside of the region continue to recognize the importance of immigration for the region. But this observation hardly diminishes the need for policies that recognize the broader economic context. If the region wants to attract and retain a greater share of immigrants in light of its demographic realities, it must pair measures to improve the quality and delivery of community services with policies that expand the palate of economic opportunities and affordable housing among other factors that ultimately shape the settlement decisions of immigrants. In short, community services matter, but only to a degree.

The fifth section of this report will detail the recommendations that the author has developed on the basis of the findings described earlier. In particular, the report will highlight the need for policies that (i) redefine the rationale for attracting and retaining immigrants to the region; (ii) focus on economic development; (iii) ensure collaboration and coordinate activities among stakeholders; and (iv) respond to the regional realities of the South Okanagan on the premise that the immense diversity of rural Canada prohibits a one-size-fits-all set of solutions (Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin 2009). This section will also highlight the ongoing need for policies that promote racial sensitivity in light of new research that raises critical questions about the degree of racial tolerance in the region and the neo-liberal premises that underpin local at-

tempts to regionalize immigration (Aguiar, McKinnon and Sookraj 2011).[2] The sixth and final section of this report will offer concluding thoughts in drawing up a tentative list of potential research questions that have emerged from this research project. The report will now describe the methodology the author used to generate the research findings discussed in these pages.

SECTION 2 – METHODOLOGY

2.1 KEY DETAILS AND DATES

This report used interviews, focus groups, and field observations to assess the quality of community services serving diverse immigrant communities in smaller urban centres, as well as rural and remote areas in the South Okanagan. The study region – which the report will describe in greater detail later – includes the region running from Summerland through Penticton to Oliver and Osoyoos. This research did not consider the nearby Similkameen Valley because of time constraints. The research received funding from Metropolis B.C. through the Accelerate B.C. Graduate Research Internship Program as well as SOICS. The UBC-Okanagan Behavioural Research Ethics Board approved the project in June 2010. The board issued a research certificate that listed UBC-Okanagan associate professor Dr. Carlos Teixeira as the principle investigator and the author as the co-investigator. Research began in June of 2010 and concluded in January 2011. Overall, the author solicited input from 41 immigrants and 15 community leaders through focus groups and individual interviews. The author conducted four focus groups with immigrants in Penticton[3]

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2 See Aguiar, McKinnon and Sookraj (2011) also for list of forthcoming publications that address various aspects in Canada's hinterland.

3 The first focus group in Penticton occurred Sept. 2, 2010 with four participants. The second focus group in Penticton occurred Sept. 4, 2010 with eight participants. The third focus group in Penticton occurred Sept. 21, 2010 with five participants. The fourth focus group in Penticton occurred Nov. 7, 2010 with seven participants.

and one focus group in Oliver[4] during this period. Overall, the focus groups consulted 31 immigrants. The author also conducted 10 separate one-on-one interviews with immigrants, including one immigrant who has since left the region. Questions encompassed the following themes: quality of life; employment, and settlement experiences. In particular, the author asked immigrants whether they would consider moving elsewhere in light of their experiences in the South Okanagan. The author organized the focus groups and interviews with immigrants through volunteer contacts received from SOICS. The author also interviewed 15 community leaders representing the regional district, individual municipalities, educational institutions, social service agencies and various sectors of the business community. Questions encompassed the following themes: employment; attraction and retention of immigrants to the region; obstacles to service delivery, and economic development. The author organized interviews with community leaders through his contacts as a former journalist with the *Penticton Western News.* All focus groups and interviews were tape-recorded (when permitted) and analyzed by themes. The author composed this report during the period spanning March to April 2011.

2.2 COMMUNITY SERVICES DEFINED

This report defines community services as follows: (i) settlement services designed specifically to reach immigrant communities through designated agencies such as SOICS as well as other local agencies; (ii) services which fall either completely or partially within the domain of local municipalities. Why has the author chosen to include municipal services in this definition? Municipalities supply or support a range of services, such as arts and leisure services, recreation and local festivals, that impact the settlement experi-

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4 The Oliver focus group occurred Jan. 20, 2011 with seven participants.

ences of immigrants. Municipalities also bear partial or full responsibility for items such as zoning, urban planning and the provision of various forms of infrastructure, including public transportation. Finally, municipalities continue to assume greater responsibilities in policy areas once firmly in the domain of senior government levels, including the provision of social services, housing and local economic development services. Municipalities, in short, represent the 'front-line' of public governance, with considerable influence on the daily lives of all residents within their jurisdiction, including immigrants.

Note that this definition of community services does not include general, non-settlement services within the domain of the provincial or federal governments, because their inclusion would have significantly broadened the scope of this research. This omission, however, does not mean that senior levels of governments do not play a role in the effectiveness of community services that reach and support immigrant communities. As the report will note later, many of the local experiences that frustrate immigrants in the South Okanagan require responses that include input from all levels of government. The complex, often convoluted path towards achieving this level of coordination also hints at the broader web of complexities that might snare local service providers, as well as immigrants, as they tackle the diverse tasks of integration.

Some of these tasks have a private dimension. For immigrants, they might include the search for private-sector employment and housing and cultural support networks. Other tasks such as provision of language training, the recognition of foreign-based credentials and the funding of measures that aim to create cultural tolerance and understanding fall primarily at the feet of public institutions of the host society. Yet this division of labour is nowhere as neat in reality as it appears here. The availability or absence of community services for immigrants impacts their ability to secure key assets such as employment

and housing. In the same breath, nobody would deny that public institutions including senior levels of government shape the total supply of said assets through their policy actions or inactions on an abstract level that often appears to be distant from the daily concerns of front line suppliers and users of various community services.

The central point is this: the assets that ultimately determine whether immigrants will successfully integrate such as employment, housing, and community services among other factors such as the presence of family and friends (Teixeira 2010; Walton-Roberts 2005) come from a variety of private and public sources, some local, some more distant. Community services, in other words, represent only part of a complex picture. This observation does not attempt to downplay the significance of community services; it merely serves as a reminder that they exist within a greater context that requires considerable coordination.

2.3 RESTRICTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This research and its methodology suffer from a number of restrictions and limitations. First, this research offers a time-specific snapshot. Research conducted earlier or later would have likely generated different results for several reasons. They include, among others, broader economic and social developments inside and outside of the study region; changes in the composition of the local immigration community; and changes in the availability and quality of community services. In fact, the author experienced this third phenomenon first hand. When the author began his research, he noticed the near absence of a proper facility from which SOICS could serve immigrant communities in areas located south of Penticton in the Oliver-Osoyoos region. SOICS opened

such a facility during the research period, and the author used it to conduct a focus group with immigrants living in the area.

Second, this author did not research the use of community services by seasonal migrants, such as Mexican-born workers who participate in the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) or Canadian-born seasonal workers, such as youth from Quebec. While SOICS offers a program titled Seasonal Workers and Immigrant Owner's Connection designed to bridge cultural gaps between temporary foreign workers from Mexico and their farm operator employers, many of whom came to the region from India (AMSSA 2008), the author did not assess the quality of this program in light of his broader mandate to consider the role of services in attracting and retaining *permanent* (emphasis added) immigrants to the region.[5] Readers should note that this report will highlight literature that has traced key issues facing these vulnerable populations, such as racism and poor working conditions.

Third, the report lacks detailed information about specific programs and initiatives. Surveying individual programs would have greatly expanded the scope of this research and likely required a different methodology. Fourth, the author readily acknowledges the qualitative nature of this research. Most importantly, this research relied greatly on the assistance of SOICS. It supplied the author with institutional and financial support. SOICS also supplied the author with the vast majority of contacts for immigrants surveyed. This convenient form of sampling might raise questions about selection and response bias. Immigrants who may use SOICS services may exhibit different characteristics than immigrants who do not use SOICS services. Users of SOICS

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5 As AMSSA (2008) notes, temporary foreign workers are not eligible for settlement and adoptions services offered through the provincial government. While provincial government funds some services for temporary foreign workers through service providers, they focus on informing these workers and their employers about respective legislation that governs employment standards.

services interviewed for this project may already have well-formed potentially biased opinions about community services.

Most importantly, the author acknowledges here that SOICS' role in supporting this research might raise questions about the impartiality of the author. He has attempted to ameliorate these concerns by (i) maintaining an appropriate professional and personal distance from the agency and (ii) consulting third-party sources about the effectiveness and efficacy of the organization, without obfuscating his association with it. Readers of this report should keep these restrictions and limitations in mind. The report will now offer the background against which the research unfolded.

SECTION 3 – BACKGROUND

3.1 THE CONTEXT OF CANADIAN IMMIGRATION

It has become consensus, if not cliché, to say that immigration continues to change the face of Canada and its society. Between 2001 and 2006, the share of the Canadian population born outside the country rose by 13.6 per cent as Canada welcomed more than 1.1 million new arrivals (Statistics Canada 2007). Foreign-born residents now account for almost 20 per cent of the national population – the highest share since 1931 (Statistics Canada 2007). One obvious (but superficial) measure of this growing diversity is the number of visible, non-Caucasian minorities within the fabric of Canadian society (Statistics Canada 2010a). These different communities have further deepened the cultural diversity of Canada and their presence pays (at least on the surface) tribute to the tolerant nature of Canadian society (German Marshall Fund 2010),[6] even as the public discourse over Canada's official policy of mul-

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6 Consider the German Marshall Fund. The organization surveyed attitudes towards immigration in eight major western nations, including Canada. The study found that Canadians held on balance more posi-

ticulturalism has shifted towards a more probing, even critical tone in light of developments inside and outside of Canadian society. They include the 2007 Bouchard-Taylor Commission on Reasonable Accommodation in the Province of Quebec and the current questioning of multiculturalism in parts of Europe (Banting and Kymlicka 2010; Banting 2010). [7]

Immigrants also continue to make significant contributions to the Canadian economy (Marshall Fund 2010).[8] Many scholars see immigration as one of the principal solutions to a series of emerging problems that face the Canadian economy (Kitagawa, Krywulak and Watt, 2008)[9] as it continues to compete in a global environment. These looming problems include, among others, a shortage of workers (Kitagawa, Krywulak and Watt 2008; British Columbia 2010; Hodgson 2010)[10] with varying skills and the ability to replace retiring baby boomers in supporting and sustaining segments of the Canadian welfare state, such as health care, as the society of Canada ages due to a combination of declining fertility rates and growing life expectancy (Statistics Canada 2010a).[11] As Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin (2009) note, immigrants will

tive views about various aspects of immigration than citizens surveyed in the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands. The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Transatlantic Trends: Immigration (Washington, D.C., 2010).

7 I would like to draw the reader's attention to a particular aspect of this debate, namely the question of whether Canada's growing diversity might eventually make it more difficult for Canadians to reconcile the value of diversity with the value of solidarity. This tension — which appears in the literature as the Progressive's Dilemma — might lead to "welfare chauvinism" as progressives face a growing trade-off between their support for multiculturalism on one hand and redistribution on the other (Banting 2010).

8 As the Marshall Fund (2010) found, 67 per cent of 'Native' Canadians believe that immigrants help create new jobs as they set up new businesses. The report cites this specific statistics and others, advancing the general point that Canadians believe immigration benefits the economic and cultural vibrancy of their society.

9 The authors note that Canada is competing against other nations for top economic talent.

10 According to Kitagawa, Krywulak and Watt (2008), net international migration makes about two-thirds of Canada's population growth. This demographic dependency on immigration will continue to rise, the authors predict. They estimate that Canada will need to attract about 300,000 immigrants per year as of 2011 to maintain its standard of living and quality of life, an increase of 60,000 immigrants per year compared to the levels that have prevailed since 2000. Let us now consider British Columbia for a provincial perspective. Its government anticipates that immigrants will need to fill about one-third of the 1.126 million new job openings expected between now and 2019. On the demographic side of the ledger, the government is counting on immigrants to maintain net population growth by 2017.

11 By way of summary, the report indicates that immigration will continue to drive net population growth.

account for all net growth in Canada's labour force and total population by 2011 and 2026 respectively. Supporters of immigration also identify the phenomenon as a source of economic innovation and cultural enrichment (Kitagawa, Krywulak and Watt 2008). [12]

3.2 THE UNEVEN GEOGRAHY OF CANADIAN IMMIGRATION

As Hiebert (2009) notes, the geography of Canadian immigration appears primarily as an "urban phenomenon" (p. 42). Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs), especially Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, attract the lion's share of immigrants to Canada. About 70 per cent of all newcomers admitted into Canada between 2001 and 2006 settled in those three cites because they offer the best job prospects, a variety of social and cultural networks (Statistics Canada 2010a), as well as a host of other benefits (Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin 2009). The available literature also predicts that this "propensity" (Statistics Canada 2010a p. 27)[13] among immigrants to settle in major urban areas (Statistics Canada 2010a)[14] will only increase the diversity of Canadian cities[15] in the future as the vast majority of new arrivals qualify as visible, non-Caucasian minorities (Statistics Canada, 2010).[16]

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12 Not everybody agrees with these premises. Stoffman (2003), for example, suggests that immigration serves a neo-liberal agenda that aims to drive down labour costs.

13 Statistics Canada estimates that by 2031, 55 per cent of individuals living in CMAs would either qualify as immigrants or as Canadian-born children of immigrants. This number would reach levels of 78 per cent and 70 per cent in Toronto and Vancouver respectively. (Statistics Canada, 2010a p. 27)

14 Statistics Canada estimates that by 2031, 55 per cent of individuals living in CMAs would either qualify as immigrants or as Canadian-born children of immigrants. This number would reach levels of 78 per cent and 70 per cent in Toronto and Vancouver respectively. (Statistics Canada, 2010a, p. 29)

15 Canadian cities already rank among the most diverse in the world. Other measures of Canada's urban diversity, which Graham and Phillips (2007) cite, include 2001 statistics that show that almost half of Canada's Aboriginal peoples live in urban areas with a regional concentration in western Canada. They also highlight research that tracks the notable presence of sexual minorities in major urban centres such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver among other larger metropolitan areas.

16 While it would be a mistake to equate immigration with racial diversity, Canada's ethnic-racial diversity appears at its most obvious in its urban areas. As of 2006, 96 per cent of all visible minorities lived in Canada's CMAs.

This geography offers reasons for cheer. If Canada's claim to being a "diverse, multicultural nation" (Graham and Phillips 2007, p. 155) hinges on its larges cities, the status of Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver as the preferred destination of most newcomers appears to confirm (at least partially) the country's much-heralded commitment to tolerance, equality, and opportunity. While this measure might be far from perfect, observers cannot dismiss it either.[17] The attractiveness of Canada's largest cities also appears to confirm literature that builds on the ideas of Richard Florida (2005), who draws an explicit link between urbane diversity and tolerance on one hand, and future economic prosperity on the other. But not everybody agrees. A chorus of voices has continued to raise concerns about the urban bias that currently characterizes Canadian immigration (Walton-Roberts 2005),

Some fear that this urban bias will stress various aspects of Canada's urban infrastructure (such as schools) and create an illegal underground economy that depends on a growing supply of unskilled immigrant labour (Stoffman 2003).[18] Others, meanwhile, have drawn attention to U.S. data, which claims that "extreme clustering" (Walton-Roberts, 2005 p. 13) in urban areas may make it more difficult for immigrants to integrate themselves, trapping them in poor, ethnic ghettos, where they can survive without having to speak the language of their new home. While scholars have challenged the transferability of these research findings to Canada (Ley and Smith 2000; Hiebert 2003;

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17 Graham and Phillips (2010) reach the conclusion that urban diversity can "confer certain benefits and promote economic activity" (p. 155) after their survey of various policy tools and techniques used by four large Canadian cities — Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver — to manage various aspects of diversity.

18 While Stoffman (2003) defends immigration per se, he wonders why Canadian immigration levels exceed the levels of other western nations generally and the United States specifically in attacking the premises of Canadian immigration: demographics and economics.

Hiebert and Ley 2003),[19] the urban bias of Canadian immigration continues to generate interest for two primary reasons (Walton-Roberts 2005).

First, the perception persists, that the metropolitan areas of Canada will not be able to manage their growing diversity and the various economic and ethnic tensions that would accompany it (Walton-Roberts 2005). Second, scholars and politicians continue to sound the alarm about the state of rural Canada (Walton-Roberts 2005; Statistics Canada 2010b) as its economic status and share of the national population continues to decline in relation to urban Canada and its more diversified and dynamic knowledge-based economy (Petrov 2007).[20] This concern has over time inspired provincial, as well as federal, politicians to propose various public policies that promise to reverse the perceived decline of rural Canada. Such measures have included financial rewards for skilled professionals (such as, but not exclusively, medical doctors) to work in rural areas and the proposed regionalization of immigration away

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19 Ley and Smith (2000), for example, have found "positive but modest" (p. 59) correlations between five indicators of poverty and immigration in their survey of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver in differentiating the Canadian experience from the American and European experience. Overall, they suggest that the relationship between poverty and ethnic diversity in Canada's three largest cities appears to be far more complex than elsewhere. While Hiebert (2003) acknowledges the existence of ethnic enclaves, he sees no firm evidence that ghettos have appeared in Canada. While such fears might exist, they lack justification, he suggests. Enclaves – which one might reasonably expect to find in a multicultural society – feature many benefits, notes Hiebert, who concludes by arguing that enclaves "are not problematic as long as they are not associated with economic deprivation" (p. 29). For the economic benefits of 'ethnic' communities, see Hiebert and Ley (2003).

20 As Statistics Canada (2010b) notes in a report, about one-third of all Canadian communities reported a "continuous population decline" during the course of the 1980s and 1990s. Most of these communities can be found in the rural regions of Canada, far away from its major urban cores, which in turn have grown at the expense of rural communities. What caused this trend? Statistics Canada (2010b) cites a fundamental change in the nature of the Canadian economy for this phenomenon. Over the last two decades, Canada's economy has shed jobs in traditional, rural industries such as agriculture, mining and forestry in favour of knowledge, urban-based jobs. The report also cites what it calls "agglomeration forces" that arise whenever firms concentrate activities and resources in close proximity to each other in the growth of Canada's urban centres. Other factors behind this broader change in the distribution of Canada's population include economic diversification and human capital. Communities that failed to diversify their economies and improve educational opportunities experienced population decline, the report concludes. As Petrov (2007) notes, regions outside of the major urban areas have failed to escape the "staple trap" (p. 453) and profit from knowledge-based opportunities as they exist in urban areas. But he also holds hope that rural communities could benefit from a knowledge-based economy. Burstein (2007) appears to be less optimistic. As Burstein (2007) notes, the case for "linking cultural and religious diversity to economic performance is not particularly robust" (p.44).

from Canada's major metropolitan areas into its rural hinterland through several means (Reimer 2007; Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2001). In this context, it is also important to note that some believe that the regionalization of immigration would not only benefit the rural regions, but also immigrants themselves (Bernard 2008; Bauder 2003).

3.3 THE REGIONALIZATION OF IMMIGRATION

The proposed regionalization of Canadian immigration for the benefit of specific provinces, regions and specific communities has not entered the public discourse as a new concept (Garcea 2003). In fact, regionalization has largely defined the history of Canadian immigration, certainly during certain stages (Garcea 2003). But if the general debate about the merits of regionalization reveals evidence of substantial agreement among policy makers about the supposed benefits of regionalization, other related questions have generated far more debate, some of it contentious. This debate has revolved around the following questions. Which specific regions should benefit from regionalization? Which figure represents the appropriate level of immigration to any province, territory, regions or community (Garcea 2003)? Which (if any) alternative measures could accomplish the state goals of regionalization, and the reversal of demographic and economic decline (Garcea 2003)?

Questions of this sort rose to the forefront in the early 2000s after the results of the 2001 Census had unleashed an ongoing national debate about the state of rural Canada. This debate also generated a notable since-abandoned national proposal from then-Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Dennis Coderre to regionalize immigration. Proposed in 2002, Coderre called for the settlement of 1 million immigrants in rural Canada by 2011. The proposal would have offered skilled immigrants such as nurses and teachers, among

other professions, permanent resident status in Canada if they had chosen to live for periods of three or five years in the Prairie or Atlantic provinces, or in the rural parts of Quebec, Ontario or British Columbia (Abu-Laban and Garber 2005; Clark 2002). This contractual agreement, which Coderre sold to public as a "regional development policy" (Abu-Laban and Garber, 2005 p. 538), enjoyed some level of political support in parts of rural Canada (Abu-Laban and Garber 2005).

But the measure also received criticism from a host of national media commentators (Abu-Laban and Garber 2005) and academics such as Stoffman (2003), who compared it to legislation that had once sustained the former Apartheid regime of South Africa, an allusion to the questionable legality of Coderre's scheme under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, particularly S.6 (Rose and Desmarais 2007).[21] While the mandate of this report prohibits the author from exploring Coderre's proposal in greater detail, it points to the practical and political, not to mention legal, difficulties of regionalizing immigration.

Notwithstanding such specific criticisms and broader concerns, the idea of spreading the "wealth of immigration" (Copps 2007)[22] has remained on the radar of the federal government (Brock 2009; Burstein 2007; Garcea 2003).[23] Provincial governments, which share constitutional jurisdiction over immigration under S. 95,[24] also continue to grant immigration policy greater pri-

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21 As Rose and Desmarais (2007) note, the Charter limits the ability of governments to actively direct the initial destinations of immigrants as they arrive in Canada, as well as their subsequent settlement choices.

22 Copps, a cabinet colleague of Coderre during the era of former Liberal prime Jean Chretien, echoed Coderre's general idea when she called for "national strategy to grow immigration everywhere" in an effort to "retain the long-term viability of huge swaths (of Canada) that are bleeding brainpower to Canada's largest cities." Such a program, she predicts, would save "dying communities" across the country.

23 Garcea (2003) argues that the regionalization of immigration could well form part of a "National Policy for the 21st Century," as long as such a policy unfolds as a "concerted and coordinated effort on the part of key stakeholders within the governmental, business and not-for-profit sectors". Available at http://integration-net.ca/infocentre/2003/002.htm.

24 Note the 1991 Canada-Quebec Accord. As the Library of Parliament (2008) notes, the accord gives Quebec sole responsibility for "selection, reception and integration of immigrants to Quebec" in an effort to "pre-

ority through their Provincial Nominee Programs (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2010; Rose and Desmarais 2007).[25] They grant provinces the right to select immigrants to fill specific labour (and in the case of Quebec, linguistic) needs (Walton-Roberts 2005). Municipalities – which lack constitutional powers, since they are creations of provincial governments – have also developed a number of measures to attract and retain immigrants in an effort to maintain their demographic and economic sustainability (Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin 2009; Reimer 2007; Walton-Roberts 2005). As Burstein (2007) concludes, all levels of government have developed an interest in the rebalancing of Canada's population.

The report will now profile the study area, the South Okanagan, a semi-rural region located in the semi-arid, southern interior of British Columbia. This description will inevitably feature comments about the larger region to which it belongs, the Okanagan Valley. Two reasons justify this approach. First, the South Okanagan shares a number of connections and common characteristics with other parts of the Okanagan Valley, which no one can ultimately ignore. Features, which unite the South Okanagan with other parts of the region, include its namesake lake, its eco-system, its Aboriginal history, its European settlement history, its transportation infrastructure, as well as a host of other institutions and linkages that continue to shape the cultural, educational, social, economic, and demographic fabric of the region (Webber 1999). This chosen approach will also encourage comparative analysis.

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serve Quebec's demographic weight within Canada and to integrate immigrants to the province in a manner that respects the distinct society of Quebec" (p.2).

25 As Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2010) note, 9 out of the 10 provinces (minus Quebec) have agreements with Ottawa that cover issues, such as the provision of settlement services, language and labour training, as well as the Provincial Nominee Program.

THE SOUTH OKANAGAN: A REGIONAL PROFILE

The study area appears on maps in the southern Interior of British Columbia, roughly halfway between the major metropolitan area around Vancouver and the rural Alberta border as the terminal tip of the Okanagan Valley, a narrow strip of land that, like its namesake lake, runs north to south from the City of Vernon to the Town of Osoyoos located near the international border with the United States. Estimates published in 2010 pegged the current population of the Okanagan region at 351, 342 — about 7.75 percent of B.C.'s population (B.C. Statistics 2010)26. The City of Kelowna, located in the central part of the region, ranks as its largest municipality with an estimated population of 121,306 and serves the surrounding area as its commercial and institutional hub. Other major regional centres include the City of Vernon and the City of Penticton, the largest municipality in the study region. Other notable communities in the South Okanagan include the District of Summerland, the Town of Oliver and the Town of Osoyoos located at the international border with the United States.

Historically, the region has had the image of a traditional hinterland, whose small and distant communities depended on the shipment of locally grown fruit varieties to distant markets and visiting tourists from urban centres for their economic survival (Aguiar, Tomic and Trumper 2005; Webber 1999). This dynamic changed at the end of the 1970s as the region started to develop a retirement industry (primarily in Kelowna but elsewhere as well)

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26 The author reached these figures by drawing on 2010 population estimates (rather than official 2006 Census figures) published in early 2010. The author reached the regional population figure by adding up the published population estimates for the three regional districts that cover the region: North Okanagan Regional District (pop: 83,139) Central Okanagan Regional District (pop: 185,443) and the Regional District of South-Similkameen (pop: 82,760). Note that the RDOS also includes the communities of Keremeos and Princeton, as well as their adjoining rural areas located in the nearby Similkameen Valley. But their joint population totals of 4,511 (not including rural areas) do not alter the total balance in a significant way. To calculate the region's share of the overall provincial population, the author used the estimated figure of 4.530,960. B.C. Statistics (2010).

that mythologized the natural attractions of the region such as its seemingly idyllic scenery, mild winters, and plentiful hours of sunshine (Aguiar, Tomic and Trumper 2005). This economic transition has led to the rise of an ever-expanding retirement industry recognized across the country. This industry, with its particular social geography (adult-only housing, gated communities, golf courses) and related services such as health care has benefited Kelowna (Aguiar, Tomic and Trumper 2005), but investors have co-opted the marketing techniques of the entertainment and tourism industries to sell the region as a whole as a particular lifestyle choice. (Aguiar, Tomic and Trumper 2005).

The evolution of the region's tourism industry has mirrored these developments. Whereas the region once advertised itself as a destination for youth and young families looking for affordable vacations, it has since changed its marketing focus toward an older and wealthier clientele (Getz and Brown 2006; Aguiar, Tomic and Trumper 2005; Martin and Williams 2003). This shift has emphasized the growing wine industry of the region in particular, which in turn has collaborated with local tourism agencies and commercial real estate developers to expand its reach (Poitras and Getz 2005).27 The growing presence of the wine industry in the Okanagan, with its various allies in economic development offices and the development community, has also supplied the vocabulary for the so-called 'Silicon Vineyard' strategy, an attempt with, so far, mixed results in attracting high-tech industries to the region on the strength of its lifestyle (Aguiar, Tomic and Trumper 2005)28 and low labour

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27 This growth appears to be most visible in the South Okanagan, particularly in the Naramata region northeast of Penticton, as well as more southern destinations. Consider the Town of Oliver, which advertises itself as 'Canada's Wine Capital' on the premise that wine tourism represents the best path towards economic development as the importance of agriculture has declined. This branding and its accompanying development has created its own set of circumstances and challenges, such as the loss of environmental habitat in an area whose ecosystem ranks among the most diverse yet threatened in all of Canada (Poitras and Getz 2006).

28 At this stage, the author would like to note that he previously worked at one of the companies, Bridges. com, which Aguiar, Tomic and Trumper (2005) reference in their paper. The author, for the record, lost his position with Bridges.com in June 2001 after 14 months of employment, as the company trimmed down its

costs. These various marketing efforts – consistent with the "commodification of retirement" (Aguiar, Tomic and Trumper 2005, p. 129) – coupled with other developments such as the 2005 opening of UBC-Okanagan29 – have contributed significantly to a recent housing boom (McEwan 2010; Teixeira 2010). It has occurred primarily, but not exclusively, in Kelowna, which has become one of the fastest growing cities in Canada (Aguiar, Tomic and Trumper 2005) experiencing a period of rapid growth (Teixeira 2010) defined by rising housing costs and low vacancy rates among other measures.

Other communities in the region, including Penticton in the South Okanagan, have also experienced a frenzy of residential construction during the previous decade, some of which appeared to have been too ambitious in size and scope (Walkinshaw 2011b; Trudeau 2008).[30] This optimistic mentality (Shields 2010) – much of it premised on the assumption that the region would continue to attract wealthy retirees – also contributed to the construction of the South Okanagan Events Centre in Penticton, a 5,200-seat indoor facility whose final price tag eventually reached $81 million (Walkinshaw 2010c). The facility – whose opening in 2008 coincided with the near-collapse of the global financial system – has since become the source of much public controversy as its private operators, based in the United States, have failed to meet performance targets (Walkinshaw 2011a). Public-sector unions, meanwhile, have called the facility a "White Elephant in Wine Country," whose performance thus

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content department as part of a larger downsizing. The author departed Bridges.com on professional terms and remains in personal contact with current and past Bridges.com employees, including Bud Mortenson, manager of public affairs at the University of British Columbia-Okanagan.

29 The provincial government created the university by re-naming and expanding the main Kelowna campus of Okanagan University College, which ceased to exist. Its smaller satellite campuses in Kelowna, as well as in surrounding communities, became Okanagan College.

30 Consider the demise of the Skaha Beach Club and Spa Resort planned for Penticton. The developer had purchased the city's landmark waterslides for purpose of turning the site into the eventual home of what he advertised as a "world class resort" that would attract well-heeled tourists from around the world. But the project, with an estimated value of $150 million, generated considerable public opposition and eventually failed to secure the necessary financing as the mortgage market collapsed in 2008. Other smaller projects planned for the area also failed to get off the ground for similar reasons (Trudeau 2008).

far has failed to deliver promised cost savings and service improvements in undermining public ownership of community assets (Walkinshaw 2010a).

South Okanagan: Aging Demographics

While this recent housing boom has faded (Michaels 2010),[31] its echoes continue to reverberate across the social, economic, and demographic land-scape of the region. Consider the following developments. Regional housing prices have remained consistently high despite a temporary dip in demand. This condition has in turn limited the livability of regional cities, including Penticton, according to *Money Sense* (2011) research that ranks 180 Canadian cities with more than 10,000 residents along a range of measures.[32] They in-clude population growth, access to health care, household income, discre-tionary income, and job prospects and affordable housing, a category in which Okanagan communities finish near the bottom of the rankings.[33] Worse, this same research also reveals that Okanagan communities, including Penticton, rank towards the middle and lower end of scales that measure discretionary income[34] and job prospects.[35] In short, residents living throughout the region face high housing costs, but a limited if not small number of well-paying job opportunities.

It can also be argued that the housing boom has further aged the local population in attracting retirees from across the country. Officials in Kelowna,

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31 As Michaels (2010) notes in citing the B.C. Housing Forecast 2011-2013, published by the Central 1 Credit Union, housing markets in the Okanagan, the Kootenays, and part of Vancouver Island will continue to see "weak demand in 2011 as mortgage rates rise and buyers remain hesitant to make discretionary and luxury purchases."

32 Penticton ranks 133rd, whereas Kelowna ranks 121st. Vernon led all Okanagan communities, finishing 49th overall.

33 Vernon finished 167th in terms of housing affordability, one spot better than Penticton; Kelowna, mean-while, finished 176th. Money Sense (2011)

34 In terms of discretionary income, Penticton finishes the worst among Okanagan communities, at 135th overall; Vernon ranks 125th, whereas Kelowna checks in at 77th.

35 In terms of job prospects, Penticton also ranks last among Okanagan communities at 131st. Kelowna ranks 87th whereas Vernon ranks 73rd. Money Sense (2011)

which already qualifies as the oldest CMA in Canada based on its proportional share of seniors as stated in the 2006 Census (Statistics Canada 2007b),[36] expect that their city will continue to grow older faster than other age groups through 2030 (City of Kelowna 2008). Similar trends also appear on the horizon in other parts of the Okanagan, including the South Okanagan, where Penticton also confronts a population pyramid similar to that of Kelowna (Statistics Canada 2007b).

Consider the following figures for selected communities in the South Okanagan (Table 1).

TABLE 1: THE MEDIAN AGE AND PERCENTAGE SHARE OF POPULATION AGED 65+ FOR SELECTED COMMUNITIES IN THE SOUTH OKANAGAN.

JURISDICTION	POPULATION	MEDIAN AGE	% 65+
Summerland	10,825	49.5	25.8
Penticton	31,910	47.3	25.7
Oliver	4,370	54.6	35.0
Osoyoos	4,755	58.5	37.0
B.C.	4,113,485	40.8	14.5

Source: Statistics Canada 2007b.

As Table 1 shows, the region's population trends toward the upper, older end of the age distribution. Available population projections predict that this trajectory will continue (B.C. Statistics 2009a).[37] These broader trend lines mean that the region's eligible workforce – already smaller in relation to the provincial workforce (Statistics Canada 2007b)[38] – will continue to shrink unless the

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36 Nearly 19 per cent of Kelowna's 2006 population had reached the age of 65 or up. (Statistics Canada 2007b)

37 B.C. Statistics (2009a) predicts that the share of the population aged 65 and older living inside the boundaries of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen will reach 30.3 by 2019 – up from 25.8 per cent in 2009. While this regional trend line follows the provincial trend line of up 14.7 in 2009 to 18.6 per cent, it far exceeds its magnitude and pace. Note that this trend line represents a regional perspective for the entire South Okanagan. Sub-regional figures suggest that some areas of the region will age faster.

38 The Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen – whose administrative jurisdiction covers the vast majority of the populations studied as part of this project – records a labour participation rate of 55.5 per cent compared to 65.5 per cent for the province itself (Statistics Canada, 2007b).

region can find ways to attract and retain qualified workers, including those who have arrived in Canada from abroad. One such measure came forward in 2004, when the then-Liberal government in Ottawa partnered with the B.C. Liberal government in Victoria to launch the Regional Immigration Initiative (Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin 2009). This partnership identified the Okanagan region as one of eight areas that could benefit from additional immigration.

Overall, this agreement between Ottawa and Victoria – one of many designed to regionalize immigration into British Columbia (Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin 2009) – pursued three goals: (i) to "create awareness of immigration as a tool to support socio-economic development outside of the Greater Vancouver area," (ii) to "increase the capacity of these communities and regions to attract and retain immigrants" in the identified areas; and (iii) "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" (Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin, 2009, pp. 32-33). This agenda has, as a result, inspired a number of future policy initiatives, such the creation of the Welcome B.C. Initiative announced in 2007 (Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin 2009).

Immigration Patterns in British Columbia

But this agenda also acknowledges past failures and confirms the relative unattractiveness of the region as a permanent settlement option. Vancouver's CMA draws the largest share of immigrants who arrive in British Columbia – almost 91 percent (B.C. Statistics 2009b). Victoria's CMA, meanwhile, has recorded the second highest share of immigrants arriving British Columbia (B.C. Statistics 2009b). Several reasons appear to explain this preference among

immigrants for the larger metropolitan areas. As researchers at B.C. Statistics note, the larger centres offer individuals of varying skills a wider range of employment opportunities (B.C. Statistics 2009b). The larger centres also offer a greater variety of support systems designed to speed up the integration process. Established ethnic and cultural communities in those centres may also play a role in attracting immigrants (B.C. Statistics 2009b). The number of immigrants who are willing to settle outside the Vancouver and Victoria CMAs has correspondingly stagnated, even declined, as was the case during the 1980s (B.C. Statistics 2009b). Local elites have acknowledged this dynamic. One South Okanagan mayor, who participated in this research, cited the lack of local job opportunities as one of the contributing reasons.

> For us, the major problem is the lack of jobs. There is a lack of industry; there is a lack of manufacturing ... so if you are coming here to find work, it is tough, really, really tough. And the jobs that are more frequently available are those that are minimum wage, and that makes it very difficult to live comfortably.

One local economic development officer noted that the high cost of housing in the region compounds the unattractiveness of the region for immigrants unless they arrive in the region with financial means and in-demand professional skills.

> "If you are an unskilled migrant, there is no use coming here. I will be blunt. You might to want to come here, but how do you live? You might find rental (housing), but you are not going to go ahead in a lot of respects. For doctors, that is not really an issue.

 More recent statistics have revealed a small reversal in this trend line. Consider the numbers. In 2005, the share of immigrants who chose to live outside Vancouver and Victoria rose 17.2 compared to 2004. B.C. Statistics also recorded significant annual increases in 2006 (14.2 per cent) and in 2007 (8.5

per cent). As for specific locations, Kelowna has emerged as the most popular destination outside of Vancouver and Victoria. It attracted over 13 percent of all B.C.'s immigrants who chose to settle in "other areas" as of 2007, thus doubling its share of immigrants compared to 1990. (B.C. Statistics 2009b). Note, though, that this dynamic has not significantly changed the demographic profile of Kelowna specifically and the region generally. Internal rather than international migrants, often in the form of rich, Anglo-Saxon retirees from other parts of Canada (Aguiar, Tomic and Trumper 2005), have primarily driven the growth of the regional population (Teixeira 2010). The racial diversity of the larger Okanagan has also remained relatively low, even as it continues to change (Steyn, 2008; Bahbahani 2008).

This dynamic reflects a particular pattern that defines international immigration into British Columbia (B.C. Statistics 2009b). Whereas the CMAs of Vancouver and Victoria attract immigrants who qualify as visible minorities, areas outside those major settlement centres attract primarily, but not exclusively, immigrants from Western Europe (primarily England, as well as Germany) and the United States (B.C. Statistics 2009b; Rose and Desmarais 2007).[39] These patterns appear to perpetuate the European heritage of the region and notions of 'whiteness' with its various dimensions, including racism, homophobia and the legacy of colonialism (Aguiar, Tomic and Trumper 2005). Many of these elements have also appeared in the South Okanagan, some of

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39 Asian countries make up the top four source nations for immigrants landing in Vancouver, with 23 per cent of new arrivals coming from China. The United States occupies the (distant) fifth position in this ranking of source nations. England, meanwhile, has lost its status as the major source nation of immigrants to British Columbia in confirming the broader historical evolution of Canadian immigration pattern. But regional figures for British Columbia tell a different story. In 2007, England supplied the largest absolute number of immigrant landings (691) in areas outside out of Vancouver and Victoria, with the United States a close second (570). Overall, this duo of countries supplied 39 per cent of all immigrant landings outside Vancouver and Victoria. India occupied the third rank among the source countries of immigrants settling in other areas of British Columbia. (B.C. Statistics 2009b). Figures from Kelowna (and elsewhere, as the report will show in a moment) confirm this dynamic. Sixty-five per cent of all immigrants from Kelowna have arrived from Europe. See also Styn (2008).

which the report will now highlight in describing the characteristics of immigration in this area.

Immigrants in the South Okanagan

This section opens with the following observation: immigration patterns throughout the South Okanagan do not reflect larger provincial patterns. Consider the populations of selected communities. As Table 2 shows, local populations include fewer immigrants generally and fewer visible minorities specifically compared to provincial figures.

TABLE 2. THE SHARE OF IMMIGRANTS AND VISIBLE MINORITIES AS A PERCENTAGE OF POPULATIONS OF SELECTED COMMUNITIES IN THE SOUTH OKANAGAN.

JURISDICTION	IMMIGRANT (%)	VISIBLE MIN (%)
Summerland	16	4
Penticton	16	5
Oliver	17	4
Osoyoos	18	2
B.C.	27	25

Source: Statistics Canada, 2007b.

The regional share of immigrants has actually declined slightly from 17.1 in 1991 to 16.6 in 2006, just as the provincial share of total immigration into Canada continues to rise (B.C. Statistics 2006). Digging deeper into the regional numbers and available literature, one finds the following. Eighty per cent of the region's immigrant population arrived before 1991, primarily from northwestern Europe and the United States. Less than six per cent of all immigrants said to be living in the region (775) arrived between 2001 and 2006 (B.C. Statistics 2006).[40] Three source countries/regions supplied the majority of these recent newcomers: the United States (95); Europe (160) and

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40 According to the 2006 Census, 13,160 immigrants lived in the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen. According to the same information, 10,640 of them had arrived before 1991. A total of 775 immigrants arrived between 2001 and 2006.

Southern Asia (315), particularly India (310) (B.C. Statistics 2006). These figures confirm the status of South Asians as the largest single visible minority group in the South Okanagan, as they account for almost 63 per cent of the regional population that qualifies as a visible minority (Statistics Canada 2007b). These figures also confirm earlier observations about the propensity of the region to attract a disproportionate share of Caucasian immigrants from sources which supply a shrinking share of the total number of immigrants who arrive in Canada.

Other statistical facts concerning immigrants in the South Okanagan also deserve mentioning. South Okanagan immigrants – contrary to provincial trends – play a prominent role in the primary industries of the region, particularly in the regional fruit and wine industry.[41] South Okanagan immigrants also report lower wages than the rest of the provincial population, but fewer cases of low income in relation to the rest of population. South Okanagan immigrants also tend to be older than the general population and report significant educational achievements, exceeding the provincial share of bachelor's and advanced degree holders. (B.C. Statistics 2006). Overall, it would be more than fair to argue that the characteristics of immigration in the South Okanagan contradict broader trends in offering a unique social geography.

Growing Racial Diversity and Tensions in South Okanagan

The diversity of this landscape has only increased in recent years. Various sectors facing local labour shortages (South Okanagan Immigration and Community Services 2007; Leung 2008) such as the construction (Aguiar, McKinnon and Sookraj 2011) and fruit industries (Otero and Preibisch 2010;

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41 41 Much of the region's fruit industry has been under the stewardship of settlers from Portugal, then from South Asia. German settlers, meanwhile, have had a considerable hand in the emergence of the wine industry.

Leibel 2007) have tried to close labour gaps by importing seasonal labour. This approach has had several effects. First, evidence from elsewhere suggests that it actually discourages permanent settlement of immigrants (Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin 2009) in undermining attempts to regionalize immigration. The growing, albeit temporary, presence of several hundred Mexican-born farm workers under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) since 2004 has also created a unique set of challenges for local service providers and community leaders – challenges for which they currently lack a significant legislative mandate not to mention sufficient financial resources as seasonal workers deal with inadequate housing, long working hours and language barriers among a long list of deficiencies (Otero and Preibisch 2010). Other groups of formal and informal seasonal workers such as Punjabi immigrants who work as contractual farm workers and youth who arrive from Quebec face similar barriers (Otero and Preibisch 2010; Leibel 2007).

One community informant, whose organization has a history of highlighting issues facing seasonal workers in the region, said the current infrastructure is insufficient to deal with growing presence of migrant workers from Mexico.

> You need a whole organization just to deal with (Mexican) farmer workers…
> but this what we have. So how can we ensure that their human rights are
> protected and that they have a positive experience? The context was that
> the French-Canadians were not coming back because of all the issues. That
> is why we had to get people from Mexico. They thought everyone hated
> them here…and then we see less and less French-Canadians every year. And
> rather than deal with those issues, we bring in people from poor countries.

The seasonal confluence of linguistic and ethnic diversity in a region which appears to meet the definition of what Aguiar, Tomic and Trumper (2005) would call a "white, Anglo-Saxon space" (Aguiar et al. 2005, 136) has also, on more than on occasion, led to racial tensions between the various groups (Leibel

2007). The informant, whose organization has a history of working with different groups of seasonal workers, confirmed this in highlighting a particular aspect of this issue.

> There is friction sometimes between the French-Canadians and the Mexicans (over perceived preferential treatment). There is resentment because the French-Canadians have lost their jobs.

Overall, this same source cited several incidents of explicit and subtler cases of racism in the region. Indeed, the region gained national notoriety during the 1990s thanks to Oliver resident Bernard Klatt, who hosted several racist Internet sites through his service provider company (Roberts 1998). A combination of public revulsion and pressure from various public agencies, including police, eventually forced Klatt to suspend his service. Klatt's efforts to host a meeting of the Canadian Free Speech League, a group suspected to be a front for Holocaust deniers and white supremacists, also failed thanks to public protest and pressure from the municipality (Roberts 1998). Municipal leaders interviewed for this report noted that this individual does not represent the majority position. Yet racism remains a concern throughout the entire region (Rolke 2011), including the South Okanagan.

Concluding this major section of the report, it appears that the South Okanagan (along with the rest of the region) stands on the edge of a major threshold, if it has not crossed it already. While parts of the region have recorded a significant population growth, much of this growth has occurred at the upper end of the population pyramid, which is starting to resemble a mushroom with a narrowing stem of young people supporting an ever-expanding top of retirees. One South Okanagan mayor fears that this dynamic will create gaps in the provision of general services.

> They (seniors) are going to be demanding services and there is not going to
> be anybody to fill them

Another South Okanagan mayor echoed similar concerns in declaring the attraction and retention of new residents including immigrants to the region a top priority.

> It is probably the most important issue in my mind when I think about how
> this community ought to grow in the future. Is it growing? Is it stabilizing?
> Or is it actually declining and that for me, that is the major worry...we are
> going to lose more and services...we are going to be facing a crisis in a few
> years' time.

Stakeholders have, as suggested earlier, recognized this reality in developing a number of measures, including the regionalization of immigration, along with importing seasonal labour. But the agenda of attracting and retaining additional immigrants faces considerable odds in light of current immigration patterns, which in turn reflect broader economic patterns. As this report has shown, immigrants continue to prefer Vancouver, and to a lesser extent, other CMAs, including Kelowna. This reality then raises the central questions that animate this research. What is the state of local services supporting immigrant communities? How can they be improved? And what role do services play in the successful attraction and retention of immigrants to rural areas such as the South Okanagan? The report will present answers to these questions.

SECTION 4 – RESEARCH RESULTS

This section of the report will detail the results of the author's qualitative study of community services as defined in the methodology of this report. It will first discuss settlement services and then offer an assessment of services offered fully, or in part, by municipal governments in the region.

4.1 SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Bearing in mind the restrictions and limitations identified earlier, the large majority of immigrants who participated in the various focus groups expressed little obvious dissatisfaction with the settlement services offered through the main supplier of such services, SOICS.[42] In fact, the focus groups and interviews revealed that the value of SOICS goes beyond the discrete services, which the agency provides as part of its mandate. As one female focus group participant said, SOICS serves as an exchange where newcomers can gather several key pieces of information about their new community in an efficient way, whether this information might relate to specific immigration issues or other day-to-day issues that impact settlement, such as the securing of relevant documents. This immigrant summed up this benefit as follows:

> The community is very good, but you need somebody to bring you into the community, and for me it was this place (SOICS) here. Before, it was just trying different places.

The informant, whose organization has interacted with community groups that access SOICS services over the years, independently confirmed the quality of key settlement services such as language classes.[43]

> As far as I understand, the language lessons that are offered through (SOICS) are great, if you can get there. I have only heard good things, if you can get there. But the problem is getting there, and a lot of people cannot even apply for their new driver's license, even if they have a car, because they need the language lessons.

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42 One notable disagreement came from a male immigrant who had found work in the IT department of a local bank. He questioned the very need of settlement services. "Government is paying these Workzone people and this place (SOICS) money," he said. "They are making a lot of money. Why are you wasting it there? Give it to the people who actually need it."

43 At this stage, the author would like to note that this particular informant expressed surprise that she had received an invitation to participate in this research, as her organization has not always had good working relations with SOICS. When the author asked this source to elaborate on the nature of said disagreements in the past, she declined to expand.

This commentary identifies one of the central complaints that focus group participants aired: the inability to access settlement services for a variety of reasons, including, as suggested earlier, effective and affordable means of transportation. Immigrants who may not have access to a private vehicle for a variety of reasons such as language and financial barriers will find it difficult to reach settlement services because the region lacks an effective public transportation system. This assessment applies to the communities in which SOICS currently offers settlement services – Penticton and Oliver – as well as the region as a whole. For example, residents living in the various South Okanagan communities cannot currently reach any of the neighbouring communities including Kelowna by regular public transit (Depner 2008a).[44]

Yes, regional municipal leaders have recognized this reality. Yes, Penticton – the largest city in the region and main hub of available settlement services – has, since 2002, invested additional resources in its public transportation system. Yes, regional officials are planning a broader review of the regional transportation system (Arstad 2011). But the focus groups have made it more than clear that Penticton's local system currently fails to meet their needs. Oliver, meanwhile, lacks a public transit system entirely. This service gap has caused considerable frustration among immigrants, particularly among newcomers who live outside Penticton, which until recently has served as the central location of settlement services. A female immigrant, who recently arrived

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44 The author would like to note that parts of the Okanagan region have experienced some notable improvements in regional transits since the opening of UBC-Okanagan. Residents of Vernon can now reach Kelowna by public transit thanks to the introduction of dedicated bus service from downtown Vernon to UBC-Okanagan (Smith 2008). This service, which the author has used himself, covers the 60 kilometre distance between downtown Vernon and the campus in about an hour, as it makes several stops in smaller communities along the way. Once travellers have arrived at the UBC-campus, they can transfer to reach other parts of the Kelowna region, including West Kelowna and the community of Peachland, north of Summerland. But these improvements – as beneficial as they might be – lack reach. Efforts to build a more extensive regional network have also encountered obstacles. (Waters 2011).

in Summerland from India, after working in the corporate finance sectors of Delhi and Mumbai, summed up her concerns as follows:

> I don't see a public transportation system, which is so very disappointing again, because I would want to be independent without waiting for a driver's license or having to buy a car and buy insurance. As a newcomer, I don't have that much (money) to support myself. Being dependent on family is okay, but then it doesn't feel all that great all the time, because you are so used to being independent.

 Immigrants living in the region have responded to this reality in a number of ways. One informant described the existence of a network of voluntary (but untrained) English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, who serve immigrants in the region. While such a system, which includes a privately organized shuttle service, deserves applause for its drive, it should be noted that it hardly represents an ideal pedagogical solution. Others, especially those living outside of Penticton, have simply abandoned efforts to access those services, particularly language services.[45] In short, it can be argued that the absence of an effective public transportation has created a service gap by restricting, perhaps even denying, immigrants the use of available services. This gap has closed somewhat since SOICS expanded its small but dedicated presence in Oliver, where the agency now operates an expanded branch office on the town's main thoroughfare rather than a small office located in a local church away from the downtown core. This improvement now permits immigrants who live in the Oliver and Osoyoos area to access a variety of settlement services previously unavailable.[46] But this improvement does not negate the need for

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45 One immigrant living in the Oliver area with his family recently resumed English language lessons twelve years after he had abandoned such efforts, partly because he could not access such services in Penticton.

46 Notably, users of this facility can access services offered in Penticton through a remote uplink. For a detailed study of the role of technology in the delivery of immigration services in rural areas, see Mills and Legault (2007).

additional measures that improve physical access to settlement services.[47]

Yet transportation has emerged as only one of the major barriers limiting the use of settlement services. As one SOICS official noted, many newcomers to the region rely on what she called "survival jobs" – low-paying jobs in the regional tourism and services industries, which experience seasonal booms and busts. The focus groups and interviews confirmed this phenomenon. The financial precariousness that characterizes the employment status of several immigrants surveyed for this research has impacted their ability to access various settlement services, which then impacts their ability to improve their English language skills, and by extension their overall job prospects.[48] One female immigrant described this dynamic as she lobbied for higher wages, as follows.

> The important things that the government should do (to) help immigrants is, please increase the salary a little bit…that way immigrants like us, we don't have to find two jobs, three jobs to earn money…to have more time to study or do something else.[49]

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47 SOICS also practices a form of direct outreach by regularly dispatching staff to the Sikh temple in Penticton to reach the community during religious services. SOICS staff in Oliver also engages with senior leaders of that community. As one non-SOICS settlement service provider notes, this particularly prominent community of immigrants remains difficult to reach. "(W)hen it comes to the Indo-Canadian community or people from India, it is challenging to connect. Sometimes, I go to the Sikh temple and I distribute information. I like that. But there is so much segregation. I am not sure if they segregate themselves or if the community is comfortable with that. "

48 As Zehtab-Martin and Beesley (2007) note in their research of service provision in Brandon, Manitoba, some immigrants end up working for years without ever improving their language skills. While the author did not directly encounter this phenomenon in the study region, the author is aware of anecdotal evidence. Zehtab-Martin and Beesley (2007) also found in their study of community services in Brandon that immigrants struggled to access ESL lessons because they fell primarily during regular business hours. SOICS, meanwhile, schedules such lessons throughout week days, including evenings.

49 Note that not everybody agrees with this demand. When the author asked members of a different focus group to respond to this demand for higher wages, one participant offered this response. "If we are skilled immigrants, then we should be getting way above the minimum wage, so where is the point about fighting over the minimum wage?

This demand for improvement in policy areas well outside the control of settlement service providers highlights one of the central assertions of this research in confirming research elsewhere (Walton-Roberts 2005): the broader context of settlement service provision plays a crucial, perhaps decisive role in the delivery of those services. The majority of immigrants who participated in this research consistently ranked the local supply of well-paying job opportunities and affordable housing ahead of other relevant considerations, including the availability of settlement services. Frustrations about the region's high cost of housing and limited job opportunities appeared to be particularly strong during a focus group whose members self-identified as skilled immigrants. Readers will find a sampling of comments from three focus members below:

Focus Group Member #1:
The weather and the people (in the South Okanagan) are nice. We are receiving much support. So we are happy with that. At the same time, we have to pay a lot of things, but there is not enough work for my wife and I to support our family as good as we like to.

Focus Group Member #2:
In India, I was working in corporate finance department of a huge multi-national and here I am in Royal Bank and I am starting from scratch. That is far from satisfying. But then there is no option. I have to work my way up...I had four years of work experience in India. But that does not matter here, not in a Bank at least. But maybe tomorrow, when I decide to go to Vancouver, I am still not sure the kind of job opportunity I would get would be at par with what I was in my home country. I really don't know. I think immigrants are really not helped in (finding employment) than we would like. The whole purpose of being a skilled worker somehow gets defeated at the end of the day.

Focus Group Member #3:
One of the things that they say about skilled immigration is, 'come to Canada, there are jobs available.' It is not true. They are deceiving all the immigrants. Yes, there are jobs, but first you need to gain the experience

and get certified in Canada, even though you already have five, six years, or more of experience. They don't count that.

Note that these comments echo earlier concerns about job prospects facing immigrants in the region. They also highlight one of the consistent criticisms about Canadian immigration policy: its lumbering responsiveness in recognizing foreign credentials and work experience. The remedy to this reality, however, remains outside of the control of local settlement service providers.

4.2 MUNICIPAL SERVICES

None of the four communities (Summerland, Penticton, Oliver, and Osoyoos) surveyed in this research offer services that specifically cater to immigrants. For example, the four municipalities lack specific provisions to help newcomers who might be struggling with English to navigate the process and various procedures of ensuring access to municipal services such as utilities. This absence also extends to other municipal services such as recreation. At this stage, it might be relevant to remind readers that municipalities, particularly Penticton, play a significant financial role in the provision of public transit, an area which this report has already singled out for improvements. Overall though, the focus groups have revealed a general satisfaction among immigrants about the state of municipal services. They certainly did not reveal any obvious defects or any particular desire for improvements. [50] The following comment from a focus group participant might well be reflective of this broader perception.

> People here are so friendly. I myself I feel that I am more than welcomed here than in Vancouver. Public institutions, offices, they are really welcoming.

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[50] In fact, one focus group participant offered this comment. We know how to speak English; we know how to interact with people. (Municipal services) have nothing to do with immigration."

But this research has also revealed that municipalities in the South Okanagan, unlike the City of Kelowna in the Central Okanagan (Walton-Roberts 2005), have so far not dedicated significant resources that actively reach out to potential newcomers. One South Okanagan mayor readily acknowledged this failure when stating "we have not done anything actively to welcome immigrants." Other municipal leaders have echoed this point. This concession does not mean that municipal leaders are not aware of the broader reasons that might justify the need for additional services that cater specifically to immigrants. The opposite might be the case, as comments above suggested. But they readily admit that immigration-related matters rank near the bottom of priority lists[51] in the face of more pressing needs such as infrastructure improvements and tightening budgets in the face of provincial downloading municipal downsizing (Walkinshaw 2010b) and economic development. Penticton, for example, has lost several hundred jobs across a variety of sectors since 2008 (Penticton Western News 2009; Michaels 2009; Depner 2008b) in dealing with a financial shortfall that relates to the poor performance of the South Okanagan Events Centre (Walkinshaw 2011a).

It should be noted that economic development services, which receive part of their funding from municipal treasuries, have been actively recruiting doctors from inside as well as outside of Canada to fill gaps in the local supply of medical services (Patton 2009; Langerak 2008; Clark 2008). But this rather narrow form of recruitment – which happens in concert with local health officials – appears to represent the exception rather than the norm. One economic development officer offered this comment when asked about past efforts to attract a broader number of immigrants to the region.

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51 One South Okanagan mayor summed up this attitude as follows: "Unfortunately on (immigration) issues like that, we are not proactive, we are reactive."

> It hasn't been a focus of our organization; that kind of immigration is a needed thing (but) you have to do it on a shoe –string budget. It is an expensive venture.

This same economic development officer also noted that the expenses associated with recruiting would-be immigrants such as travelling to recruitment fairs abroad and building a multilingual presence on the Internet generate political opposition during a time of financial austerity.

> Politically, it is a hard sell. They think it is just a big trip. I can spend that same amount of money going to Vancouver and they don't have that issue.

Recruitment efforts also suffer from a broader vision that match identified target groups with regional needs, according to the same economic development officer.

> Nobody really gets together and says, here is what we are going to do, here is our brand, here is our mission, and here are the resources that we are going to put into this. That has never happened.

Still, efforts to attract entrepreneurial and skilled migrants to the region have gained some momentum in recent months. Much of these efforts have focused on the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. One former economic development officer, whom the author interviewed while working in the region during research, justified this approach as follows.

> We see it as an opportunity to attract people to this region, who for one thing, can afford to move here. Then we are also looking at language barriers and easily transferable skill sets.

Note that this commentary appears to confirm early observations which identified living costs as a barrier to the attraction and retention of immigrants. Also note that this commentary appears to reveal hidden assumptions among some members of the local elite that the region might be unprepared, even

skeptical, towards an influx of non-Caucasian immigrants. This same source confirmed as much when he discussed provincial efforts to recruit immigrants from Asian countries, such as South Korea and China.

> I think it would be very difficult to join them and offer someone in South Korea easy integration into this (community). All of us (economic develop- ment officers) up and down the valley realize that this program does not work for us.

In fact, comments from the same source suggest the following: local mea- sures to attract and retain immigrants confront a general lack of awareness and understanding about the broader problems facing the region that would justify the regionalization of immigration.

> I think we need to have some (community) support here first. I am hoping to have a couple of workshops this fall (2010)[52]… we need to supplement our economy with new people coming in. I am sure you have noticed the statistics. We are dwindling away if we do not have an influx of new people coming in. I think the average person isn't thinking that.

This commentary, however, should not leave readers with the impression that municipal leaders remain indifferent towards the concerns of immigrant com- munities. The mayors of Keremeos, Oliver, Osoyoos, Penticton, Princeton, and Summerland joined the Chair of the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen on February 20th, 2010 to co-sign a Community Diversity Protocol that ac- knowledges the importance of ethnic diversity in recognizing efforts to pro- mote cultural awareness and fight racism (Kidd 2010).[53] In acknowledging the need to improve the delivery of municipal services to immigrant populations,

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52 The economic development officer quoted here has since left his position. The community, which had em- ployed this economic development officer, has currently put his previous efforts on hold.

53 Local aboriginal leaders, as well as officials from senior levels of government, also participated in the signing.

one of said South Okanagan mayors has also stated that he would welcome "greater ethnic diversity" in municipal politics.[54]

> You need to have people (in municipal services) who can speak multitudes of languages when you are in a multicultural community. That is important. If I had an unlimited budget, I am sure that there are things that we can address.

This same mayor, who has had extensive dealings with the Consulate General of Mexico in helping to coordinate efforts between his municipality, other public agencies, growers and the workers themselves, also questioned aspects of the seasonal workers program in lobbying for a lifting of current restrictions.

> I would like to see some of them stay on a permanent basis…My attitude is that those are hard-working individuals. Why don't we give them an opportunity? We have an open-door policy for a lot of people in the world. Maybe that open-door policy should be (available) to the Mexican workers and give them an opportunity to get their foot in the door here.

This demand, it should be noted, echoes research elsewhere that questions the effectiveness of seasonal migration. Overall, the author has found that settlement service providers, as well as immigrants themselves, recognize the restrictions which municipalities face as they acknowledge their efforts. A provider of settlement services offered the following assessment.

> I find that municipal governments are supportive. They are busy. Sometimes, it feels like they are not up on everything. Sometimes, it seems as though they have a lack of awareness. But it is hard to be aware of absolutely everything. I guess it is up to us to help them be more aware. But I do find that they are receptive and open.

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54 During one focus group, the author asked whether participants would ever consider steps towards becoming politically active — be it on the municipal level, or in some other capacity — in lobbying for improvements that might end up benefiting immigrants. One participant responded that such a move would be counterproductive because it would draw the attention of employers. This line of questioning could certainly generate future insights into the level of political mobilization among immigrants.

On the other hand, municipal governments admit that the concerns of new-comers might not have received the attention they deserve beyond what one mayor called "symbolic measures." That said, municipal governments can play a role in attracting and retaining immigrants to the region as part of a concerted effort that would also include local suppliers of settlement services, as well as senior levels of government (Walton-Roberts 2005). This agenda, which will likely require a considerable degree of coordination, is the subject of the next section of this report.

SECTION 5 – RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the report will offer a series of recommendations that respond to the findings presented earlier. As noted above, this research has identified some gaps in the delivery of community services, particularly around issues of accessibility. But it has also become obvious that the delivery of community services unfolds within a specific context, a context that does not appear to offer many enticements for immigrants to settle in the South Okanagan. It is with this context in mind that the author will offer the following recommendations.

1. REDEFINE THE RATIONALE FOR ATTRACTING AND RETAINING IMMIGRANTS TO THE SOUTH OKANAGAN

As suggested earlier, local elites in the South Okanagan have recognized the potential benefits of attracting and retaining additional immigrants. They have acknowledged past failings, and even identified specific target groups, despite financial and political limitations. Yet it is not clear that they have developed a consistent and "robust" argument that mobilizes "the complex web of stakeholders" (Burstein 2007, 45) needed to design and implement a strategy in favour of immigration capable of earning public support. Yes, they

have made the argument that attracting and retaining a greater share of immigrants (and by extension visible minorities) would prevent the decline of the region from an economic and demographic perspective.

But this argument, which in its "most naive state" (Burstein 2007, 43) takes the form of replacing the shrinking local population with immigrants, appears to enjoy limited public support. The neo-liberal premise of this argument has also received considerable criticism (Aguiar, McKinnon and Sookraj 2011). Local elites could also advance, in the words of Burstein (2007), a "more speculative" (Burstein 2007, 43) argument by adopting the ideas of Richard Florida (2005), who has linked diversity with success in the global economy (Burstein 2007). While the author did not encounter this argument during his research, Burstein (2007) suggests that this rationale lacks strength in light of research elsewhere. A more fruitful approach would focus on multicultural diversity as a good in itself (Burstein 2007). As Burstein notes, "diversity is a core value" (Burstein 2007, 44) that animates nation-building. This, in turn, would link the rationale for regional policies promoting greater diversity to the larger national rationale underpinning immigration and multiculturalism (Burstein 2007).

2. ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION

Burstein (2007) reminds readers that recent efforts to recruit and retain immigrants to regions outside of the major gateway cities require, among other things, political leadership, time, and resources. The relative scarcity of these resources means that policies designed to regionalize immigration must be "realistic, effective and efficient" (Burstein 2007, 43). Local elites can help meet this continuum of conditions through what Burstein (2007) calls an "active" (Burstein 2007, 45) form of collaboration that sees local stakeholders,

including politicians, employers, services providers, community leaders, educational authorities and other local representatives, work with each other, as well as with federal and provincial governments. While the act of coordinating multiple institutions and individuals presents itself as a complicated and consuming task, its benefits promise to exceed its costs when measured across time (Burstein 2007). While this process of collaboration will feature a series of milestones along the way, Burstein (2007) makes a more than convincing case that it must begin with a "comprehensive (and creative) inventory of local and government resources that can be adapted to support recruitment and retention programs" (Burstein 2007, 45). This process would also offer an opportunity to review the rationale and realities of the various programs that import seasonal labour into the region. As suggested here and elsewhere, such programs might serve as barriers to the permanent attraction and retention of immigrants to the region.

3. FOCUS EFFORTS ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Immigrants surveyed for this research consistently identified the natural surroundings and laid-back lifestyle of the South Okanagan as attractive features, but many expressed concerns about its long-term economic prospects and high living costs. In fact, multiple focus group participants expressed the desire to leave the region for larger urban centres, particularly Vancouver. This is particularly the case among younger newcomers, such as the woman quoted below.

> I enjoy the weather and it is very peaceful. But I am young. I would rather live in Vancouver. But my mom really likes to live here. It is really hard for me to find a job here.

Another participant in a different focus group expressed similar sentiments.

As a place to live, it is a nice place to retire … I am used to living life (at a) fast pace and I think this is such a slow place…I think the environment is somewhat complacent…people are so very laid-back, because they are used to living life at their own pace and there is no rush…nobody is in a rush to do anything except us immigrants

In a way, the struggles of these immigrants appear to be similar to the struggles of other young individuals who live in the rural regions of Canada in facing limited job prospects, educational opportunities, and access to attractions (Clemenson and Pitblado 2007). The comments certainly highlight that economic opportunities play a crucial, if not primary, role in attraction and retention of immigrants in the South Okanagan. This context has, as a result, specific policy implications. As Burstein (2007) notes, investments designed to promote the presence of immigrants (and by implication, visible minorities) "should only be undertaken in the context of ample or growing job opportunities and a growing capacity to integrate newcomers building towards a critical, and self-sustaining, visible minority (numeric) threshold" (Burstein 2007, 44). In other words, if decision-makers in the South Okanagan commit themselves to the goal of attracting and additional retraining of immigrants to the South Okanagan, they must fold future measures towards this objective into a larger envelope of policies that promote economic development.

4. CONTINUE TO BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITIES

Note that Burstein's commentary about the importance of economic development includes a simultaneous appeal to enhance capacities that permit immigrants to integrate into their new communities. On one hand, the author understands this recommendation to mean that suppliers of settlement services must continue to monitor, and if necessary enhance, settlement services, especially services designed to combat discrimination. As Burstein

(2007) notes, the provision of such services is an "absolute" (Burstein 2007, 43) requirement. Further, Burstein (2007) writes that "members of visible minority groups, no matter where they choose to go, work or live in Canada are entitled to protection from overt discrimination" (Burstein 2007, 43). On the other hand, Burstein's appeal is also a call to improve the broader conditions of the community, such as the supply of affordable housing and the state of the public transit system. Several focus group participants also expressed frustrations with the local state of daycare facilities.[55] The author would also like to stress the importance of improving local educational institutions. Burstein (2007) identifies such facilities as an "influential" (Burstein 2007, 44) factor in the attraction and retention of immigrants. As he notes, they serve as a "stabilizing influence on minorities, a node for student recruitment, a reservoir of expertise to support local organizing efforts and a source of leadership" (Burstein 2007, 45). South Okanagan elites have certainly recognized this potential. Several community leaders interviewed for this research identified the Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Building Technologies and Renewable Energy Conservation, now under construction at the Penticton campus of Okanagan College, as the central piece of a regional cluster that would perform the functions, which Burstein (2007) outlines.

5. CONTINUE TO INVESTIGATE AND TRACK SETTLEMENT CHOICES

As Sorenson (2007) notes in her general review of the research that track settlement factors, "employment opportunities continue to be a consistent key factor" (Sorenson 2007, 124). This research has certainly confirmed this observation within the specific context of the South Okanagan in addition to identifying housing as a key factor. But, as Sorenson (2007) reminds readers,

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55 Note that SOICS offers day-care through its Penticton facility. Naturally, it features limited space and is far from comprehensive in meeting demand.

research done elsewhere, particularly in Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec, has found that immigrants might choose one rural location over another for a variety of reasons, some of which may go beyond economic considerations. They might include the proximity of family and friends, the presence of a co-ethnic group, the availability of culturally familiar services, and quality of life considerations. As Sorenson (2007, 124) notes, "to the extent that immigrants increasingly cannot be viewed as a homogenous group with the same interests and needs, we need a better understanding of the decision-making processes among immigrants from a variety of backgrounds and demographic characteristics." With this point in mind, the author submits that settlement service providers can play a crucial role in collecting this information because of their frequent contacts with various immigrant communities. The collection of this information would then permit settlement service providers to share that information with other key stakeholders (thereby strengthening institutional ties) and tailor (whenever possible) their service provision in such a way that it responds to the specific needs of the recipients.

6. MONITOR OTHER JURISDICTIONS FOR BEST PRACTICES WITH LOCAL CONDITIONS IN MIND AND AN EYE TOWARDS EXPERIMENTATION

As Silvius and Annis (2007) note, the phrase 'best practices' "represents a potentially dangerous term for those engaged in rural research" (2007, 131). They instead encourage researchers to think of smaller communities in rural areas as "snowflakes" (2007, 127). While these communities might all look the same from a distance, a closer inspection might reveal considerable differences. Each community is still distinct from the next in a number of ways, even if they might share a number of common conditions and characteristics. As Silvius and Annis (2007) note, this consideration is "of great importance

when attempting to grasp the contemporary phenomenon of rural immigration" (2007, 127). This reality is certainly evident in the South Okanagan. That said, local settlement providers (along with related stakeholders) can learn from other communities. Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin (2009), for example, have tracked some of the lessons that have emerged elsewhere in B.C. Of notable interest is the ongoing research into the possibilities and limitations of modern communication technologies. As Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin (2009) note, this emerging research has identified the internet "as the second most common source of information" (2009, 25) that immigrants use in making a settlement choice (after consulting with family and friends).

Note that this report does not offer any specific program recommendations, because such a move would have fallen outside its mandate. Also, it would have been rather presumptuous to offer such advice in the absence of extensive community consultations that, ideally, should feature the widest possible range of community organizations, agencies, municipal officials, First Nations and other relevant stakeholders familiar with local conditions and circumstances. Several informants consulted during this research lamented the absence of local mechanisms to coordinate ideas and initiatives, and this author was not willing to follow down the same path. Broad consultations also promise to generate what Burstein (2009) has identified as a desirable condition in the design of policies ostensibly designed to regionalize immigration and promote greater diversity across the country – "experimentation" (Burstein 2007, 46). As Burstein notes, the specific complexities of the real world make it impossible to predict general outcomes. Therefore, "letting flowers bloom and supporting still tender shoots may yield surprising results" (Burstein 2007, 46).

SECTION 6 - CONCLUSION

If readers were to imagine the past, present, and future of Canadian immigration as a moving, dynamic picture comparable to a (never-ending) spool of film, this report would appear to be nothing more than a small piece of still photography that captures one particular scene – the state of community services and their role in the attraction and retention of immigrants to the South Okanagan, an area that could benefit from the regionalization of immigration, if it were to go down that path. But the narrow frame of this research with its specific (read: limited) scope should not discourage readers and other interested parties from probing beyond its initial focus. The list of potential research questions, which this report has (hopefully) raised, reads as follows: which other measures could accomplish the same aims as the regionalization of immigrations? As noted above, a number of regional industries are relying on seasonal labour, even as critics of this practice could continue to mount arguments against it. While this author shares this critical perspective, the question nonetheless remains: can temporary labour be a viable, dignified alternative to the regionalization of immigration? This question deserves at least some study in light of research from Burstein (2009) who notes that "rural and remote communities should be excluded from promotional policies and (instead) be served by temporary immigration programs" (Burstein 2009, 44).[56]

This recommendation would, if extended to its fullest conclusion, mean that parts of the South Okanagan would be unsuitable for policies ostensibly designed to attract and retain a larger number of immigrants. In short, such measures might be nothing more than a waste of resources, financial and otherwise. The report has hopefully made it clear that elites inside and out-

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56 As Burstein (2007) notes, the "above recommendation is consistent with the existing distribution of immigrants which reflects visible minority preferences" (p. 44).

side of the region appear to be favorable towards the regionalization of immigration. While one might question their practical commitment towards this agenda, they have at least devoted some thought to the issue. That said, the window for action will not remain open forever. More ominously, Burstein's recommendation raises the uncomfortable question of whether it would still make sense to invest any significant resources of any kind into the region. Setting aside such scenarios for now, Burstein hints towards a future in the South Okanagan featuring a mix of policies – some geared towards attracting and retaining immigrants, others supporting seasonal labour. Whether such a division of political, financial, and social capital would benefit the region in the future appears uncertain at the moment. The question would certainly require additional study.

Two other questions loom on the horizon. If regional elites commit themselves to policies that promise to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of the South Okanagan, how will this broader commitment (and the resources that would accompany it) touch First Nations in the region? Will the regionalization of immigration further marginalize a hitherto marginalized group still dealing with the legacy of colonialism? Or will the region and its population use the continuous process of integrating another group of 'newcomers' to reconcile competing notions of citizenship, ethnicity, and race? While one should not discount hope for the latter scenario, it would be more than naive to dismiss the former scenario as unlikely. This discussion certainly underscores earlier points about the importance of an inclusive process that engages as many relevant stakeholders as possible.

It would also be a mistake to divorce the future social geography of immigration in the South Okanagan from its natural context. Yes, this relationship might not be readily apparent. But nobody would deny that the Okanagan

Valley ranks among the most diverse and threatened eco-systems in Canada. Changing its social geography against the unfolding effects of climate change would undoubtedly put additional stress on what is already a fragile environment to the eventual detriment of natural and social systems, unless current and future stakeholders find ways to balance economic and ecological interests without framing them as either-or choices. The current conditions in the South Okanagan such as they are might well tempt stakeholders to see false choices where none exist.

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