

SETTLEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

The settlement needs of employed newcomers

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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The views expressed in this report are those of Sparks and Wolfson and do not necessarily represent the views of the Government of Canada.

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PREAMBLE

The Decision to Immigrate

Leaving your home country to start anew elsewhere is obviously a life-changing event. Newcomers tell us about wanting a better life for themselves and their families. Their decisions are often prompted by political and/or economic factors. They have heard of great opportunities in Canada and consequently their expectations are high. So anxious are some to pursue a better life that they will take lengthy routes to get here. For example, we spoke with a Filipino woman who first went to Israel as a live-in caregiver because it was easier to get to Canada via Israel than directly from the Philippines. She immigrated to Canada in the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP), which meant an additional 3-year commitment to the LCP before she could begin an independent life in Canada. When asked why she didn't stay in Israel, she told us the opportunities were far greater in Canada. She had left her children behind temporarily as a requirement of the LCP, just for the opportunity to live in Canada.

Other newcomers are highly skilled professionals believing they will be able to find work quickly in their chosen field in Canada. They often come believing that Canada will welcome them with "open arms". This expectation is supported by an Immigration system that assigns points for skills/professions and higher education levels.

The Context For Immigration in Canada

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration¹ announced that Canada planned to accept up to 235,000 immigrants annually by 2002. She further stated that:

“Immigration has been a defining characteristic of Canada. From our earliest days as a nation through to the global transformations of recent decades, it has been vital to our social, economic and cultural development. Immigrants and refugees built our country, and they will continue to do so if we are to grow and prosper in the future. At the same time, Canadians want an immigration program that attracts economic immigrants who can contribute to Canada’s economic objectives, and family class immigrants who can help strengthen our communities.”

¹ CIC News Release, January 2001

The Minister went on to say:

“We also have to measure absorption capacity, which includes labour force participation as well as social and economic integration. Ensuring that newcomers can participate fully in Canadian society is an essential component of the immigration program.”

She acknowledged that “strategies have to be jointly developed to ensure that newcomers to Canada are equipped to participate in the labour market and are able to settle, adapt and integrate into their new communities.”

To this end, Citizenship and Immigration Canada is putting forward new immigration legislation (Bill C-11)² that will make changes to the point system to:

- open the front door wider to the skilled worker immigrants Canada needs to grow and prosper;
- address the need for skilled trades in the Canadian labour market;
- ensure that the selection system for skilled worker immigrants allows for an efficient selection of individuals who can succeed in a fast-changing knowledge-based economy;
- ensure that Canada selects skilled worker immigrants who have a flexible range of abilities, rather than narrow skills in one particular occupation that may no longer be in demand in Canada.

According to CIC, the legislation will address Canada's need for skilled workers by:

- introducing an improved, objective point system which was developed following extensive research and consultation with key immigration stakeholders and provincial governments;
- selecting the skilled immigrants Canada needs based on their flexible skills rather than intended occupations;
- emphasizing experience in any skilled occupation rather than designating particular occupations;
- highlighting the importance of selecting skilled tradespersons and responding to concerns about over-emphasis on advanced education;
- recognizing the importance of informal job offers from Canadian employers, including family and small business, as an element of adaptability.

² *Bill C-11 Proposed New Regulations*

These changes appear to be placing greater importance on bringing skilled workers to Canada, which in turn suggests that Canada should assist these skilled workers to maximize their contribution to the economy. This report looks at the issues facing employed newcomers as they begin the settlement process and the support they require to facilitate their full participation in Canadian life.

A recent study, conducted by The Centre for Spatial Economics³ in March 2001, concluded that a larger number of immigrants will be required than is currently targeted by the federal government. This report projects annual immigration requirements of 500,000 by 2008 in order to meet the demands for labour in the future.

Whatever the number, it is clear that there will be substantial numbers of newcomers arriving every year for the foreseeable future.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study explores what happens with respect to settlement issues to newcomers who find employment shortly after arriving in Canada. It was prompted by the assumption that these newcomers may not have the opportunity to address their settlement needs such as language, housing, and recognition of credentials prior to beginning work. We were asked to look at the following questions: Are there unresolved settlement issues? What is the impact of these unresolved settlement issues on the newcomer, their employer and society? Do these settlement issues ultimately get resolved? What services are available to assist employed newcomers? What kinds of assistance do employed newcomers need?

Defining Settlement Services

To begin we needed to understand what is meant by "settlement issues" and the services that might be put in place to help resolve them. According to a report by B. Saddeiq Holder, University of Toronto, 1998⁴, "settlement services refer to services provided to immigrants and refugees upon their arrival to facilitate their reception and settlement in a new country." Immigrant Service Organizations have a broader definition including in-depth, or long-term or clinical counselling.

³ *Does Canada Need More Immigrants?*, The Centre for Spatial Economics, March 2001

⁴ *The Role of Immigrant Serving Organizations in the Canadian Welfare State: A Case Study*, B. Saddeiq Holder, University of Toronto, 1998

In this same report, we find a description of settlement services according to the provincial and federal governments. The federal government supports settlement services through the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP). Funding is available to provide direct services such as reception; orientation; translation and interpretation; referral to community resources; para-professional counselling; general information and employment-related services; and other activities, which will improve settlement services. In addition, CIC provides programs including Language Instruction for New Canadians, LINC, Job Search Workshops (JSW), the HOST program that matches newcomers to a new Canadian friend, and Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) that provides refugees with the basic needs of life, income support and essential services.

The Government of Ontario through its Newcomer Settlement Program makes available operational funding to community-based agencies for the provision of the following direct services: assessment, information and orientation, and general settlement assistance essential for early settlement. Indirect services such as training for settlement workers and volunteers, and enhancement of the settlement service sector are also funded, as was language training until May 1997.

The word “settlement” is often used together with the word “integration”. Integration is defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council as a gradual process by which new residents become active participants in the economic, social, civic, cultural and spiritual affairs of a new homeland. This definition is supported by immigrant and refugee serving agencies. The Ontario Coalition of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)⁵ defines settlement as “a long-term, dynamic, two-way process through which, ideally, immigrants would achieve full equality and freedom of participation in society, and society would gain access to the full human resource potential in its immigrant communities.”

Best Settlement Practices, a report by the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR)⁶, states that settlement refers to acclimatization and the early stages of adaptation, when newcomers make the basic adjustments to life in a new country, including finding a place to live, beginning to learn the language, finding employment, and learning about society in the host country. This report sees integration as a longer-term process leading to the full and equal participation of newcomers in all aspects of society. Both settlement and integration are described as multi-dimensional with four key dimensions: social; economic; cultural; and political. The indicators of settlement and integration as developed by CCR are shown in the following table:

⁵ *Immigrant Settlement Counselling: A Training Guide (OCASI), 1991:8*

⁶ *Best Settlement Practices: Settlement Services for Refugees and Immigrants in Canada*, Canadian Council of Refugees, February 1998

Possible Indicators of Settlement and Integration		
Dimension	Short Term (settlement)	Longer Term (integration)
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entering job market • Financial independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career advancement • Income parity • Entry into field of prior employment
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established social network • Diversity within social network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing institutions • Engaging in efforts to change institutions
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation of various aspects of lifestyle (e.g. diet, family relationships) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging in efforts to redefine cultural identify • Adapting or reassessing values
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizenship • Voting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in political parties • Participation in socio-political movements

There has been a great deal of work done internationally as well as more locally by organizations such as OCASI and COSTI on the identification of settlement indicators. Repeatedly, employment is identified as a top indicator. Other important indicators related to good mental health, language skills, the safety and well-being of the children while parents work, and a harmonious family life.

Service providers and others have also helped to define the integration process (in the *Best Settlement Practices* report cited earlier) by identifying issues that need to be addressed by newcomers and the host country in order for newcomers to achieve full participation. The following are the issues that are relevant to the current study:

- Language – speaking the language of the host country is seen as fundamental to participation in that society. Even those with a reasonable level of proficiency in one of Canada’s official languages may still find that they must improve their language skills in order to be able to work in their field.
- Access to employment – finding a job is, for many newcomers, one of the most important steps toward integration. Participation in the labour market is also one means by which Canadian society benefits from the skills and experiences of newcomers.
- Cultural orientation – newcomers must also learn about the culture of the host country.

- Recognition of qualifications and experience – the qualifications and experience of newcomers must be recognized in order for Canada to benefit from the skills and learning of the newcomers.

METHODOLOGY

This document reports on a qualitative review of the experience of employed newcomers and the settlement and integration issues they face. We were asked to restrict our efforts to Toronto only. We were further asked to look at the experiences of newcomers who became employed quickly i.e. within 6 months of arrival. The research methods we used included:

- Literature review;
- Focus groups with employed newcomers;
- Employer interviews;
- Settlement Agency interviews; and
- Key informant interviews.

Literature review

The literature review covered a search of information from the City of Toronto, and provincial, national and international sources. A variety of Internet sites were reviewed, many of which were reached through settlement.org. The material was analyzed with a view to learning from the experiences of other jurisdictions and supporting the information we obtained through other data gathering techniques. Please refer to the bibliography for a complete list of websites and written materials reviewed.

Focus groups with employed newcomers

The methodology design called for five focus groups (about 10 participants per group) with employed newcomers. The participants were to be representative of a broad range of skill levels. Five focus groups were conducted with a total of 42 participants. The skills represented included professionals (e.g. chemists, accountants, teachers, engineers) live-in caregivers, semi-skilled and unskilled workers. We attempted to restrict participation to those who were recent newcomers (i.e. within 6 months of arrival), but this was not always possible. Those who had been here for a longer time had no trouble reflecting on their earlier experiences.

The focus groups were arranged through the cooperation of COSTI (participants were drawn from the ACCPAC training program); Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union (2 focus groups drawn from the union's membership at 2 different Toronto hotels); Intercede (participants were drawn from its clients in the Live-In Caregivers program);

and the Toronto Catholic District School Board (participants drawn from the Board's workplace language training program at a manufacturing company).

Employer interviews

The project was to include 10 interviews with employers who hire newcomers. Finding willing employers turned out to be the most challenging aspect of the study. It was very difficult to locate employers who were willing to be interviewed on this topic. We were able to complete five interviews.

We note that others have had similar difficulties in getting employers to discuss their experiences with newcomers. The Canadian Labour and Business Centre had no success when seeking information from employers on the recognition of foreign-trained credentials for its report, *Assessing and Recognizing Foreign Credentials in Canada - Employers' Views*⁷. In this study, over 800 employer organizations were initially contacted and asked to share their experiences. No responses were received. They eventually did get a sampling of employer opinion through other methods.

In this study we started with a list of potential employers provided by the Steering Committee. When we were unable to gain the cooperation of a sufficient number of employers, we asked COSTI to investigate the possibility of using its employer contacts to identify additional employers who would be willing to participate. COSTI also had difficulty in identifying willing employers.

The five employers who were eventually interviewed in this study represented large and small companies, came from the hospitality, retail, and manufacturing sectors and included both professional and non-professional occupations. Each of the companies indicated that they had hired newcomers over the last few years and felt they were able to respond to our questions.

ISAP-Funded Agency interviews

Ten ISAP-funded agencies were selected by the project advisory committee to participate in interviews. They were selected with a view to obtaining information from a broad range of agencies based on the following criteria:

- multi-ethnic versus ethno-specific client-base;
- size (small, large);

⁷ *Assessing and Recognizing Foreign Credentials in Canada - Employers' Views*, Derwyn Sangster, Canadian Labour and Business Centre, January 2001

- Settlement services only versus multiple services;
- Geographic location; and
- Women-only agencies.

Refer to Appendix A for a complete list of the agencies included in this study.

The interviews were conducted with the Executive Director, Program Coordinator or front-line staff depending on whom the organization felt was most appropriate. The interviewees were very forthcoming and had a great deal of information based on the experiences with their clients.

Key informant interviews

Several key informant interviews were conducted with a variety of knowledgeable people from government, education, union and social service sectors. These interviews were “prospecting” efforts designed to identify existing programs and services that serve employed newcomers and to gain advice about best practices based on the informants’ experiences.

Refer to Appendix B for a complete list of key informants.

PROFILE OF NEWCOMERS

To help frame this report, we offer the following profile of immigrants to Canada, together with some data on newcomers to Toronto. We note that we were unable to determine the number of newcomers who fit the criteria for this study, namely those who had gained employment within six months of arrival.

Who is coming to Canada?

The number of immigrants coming to Canada continues to increase. Table 1 shows the breakdown of immigrants for 2000 and the range anticipated for 2001 and 2002, with the total number climbing to as many as 235,000 from 227,000 in 2000. Those destined for the labour market (called “economic” immigrants in the table below) are by far the largest proportion in every year.

Immigration Arrivals to Canada, 2000, 2001, 2002			
Immigrants	2000 (actual)	2001 (range)	2002 (range)
Skilled Workers	118,307	100,500 – 113,300	105,800 – 118,500
Business	13,645	15,000 – 16,000	15,700 – 16,700
Prov./Terr. Nominees	1,249	1,400	1,500
Total Economic	133,201	116,900 – 130,700	123,000 – 136,700
Spouses, Fiancés and Children	42,702	42,000 – 45,000	44,100 – 47,000
Parents and Grandparents	17,724	15,000 – 16,000	15,700 – 16,700
Total Family	60,426	57,000 – 61,000	59,800 – 63,700
Other*	3,244	4,000	4,200
Total Immigrants	196,871	177,900 – 195,700	187,000 – 204,000
Refugees			
Government-assisted	7,367	7,300	7,500
Privately Sponsored	2,905	2,800 – 4,000	2,900 – 4,200
Refugees Landed in Canada	12,955	10,000 – 15,000	10,500 – 15,600
Dependants Abroad	3,481	2,000 – 3,000	2,100 – 3,100
Total Refugees	26,708	22,100 – 29,300	23,000 – 30,400
Kosovo Refugees	3,258**	-	-
Total Immigrants and Refugees	226,837	200,000 – 225,000	210,000 – 235,000

Table 1

Source: *Planning Now for Canada's Future*, CIC, 2001

* includes Live-in Caregivers and Special Categories

** Kosovo refugees who arrived in 1999 as part of a special movement and who obtained permanent resident status in 2000.

Over the last 20 years, in Canada, Ontario and Toronto, immigrants are becoming an increasing percentage of the total population. Toronto has experienced a greater increase than the country as a whole. Refer to Figure 1.

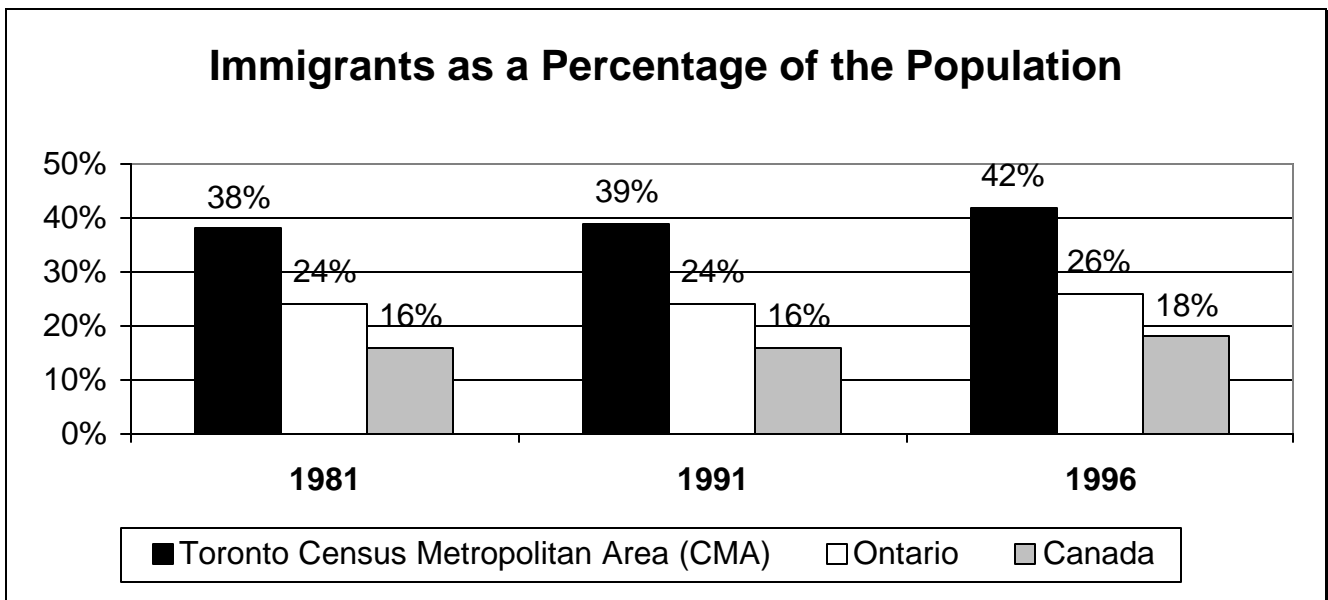


Figure 1

Source: *Recent Immigrants in the Toronto Metropolitan Area: A Comparative Portrait Based on the 1996 Census*, CIC, May 2000

We are also seeing a shift in the source countries. Table 2 shows the source countries of immigrants coming to Canada between 1996 and 2000 and ranks them 1 - 10 based on the number of immigrants from each country.

Immigration (All Classes) to Canada – Top Ten Source Countries, 1996 - 2000										
Country	1996	Rank	1997	Rank	1998	Rank	1999	Rank	2000	Rank
China	17,515	3	18,536	3	19,766	1	29,116	1	36,664	1
India	21,091	2	19,595	2	15,350	2	17,431	2	26,004	2
Pakistan	7,693	6	11,229	5	8,086	4	9,299	3	14,163	3
Philippines	13,051	4	10,861	6	8,183	3	9,163	4	10,063	4
South Korea	-	-	-	-	4,913	8	7,213	5	7,602	5
Sri Lanka	6,124	7	5,061	8	-	-	4,720	9	5,832	6
USA	5,859	8	5,051	9	4,786	9	5,539	7	5,806	7
Iran	5,798	9	7,462	7	6,768	7	5,905	6	5,598	8
Yugoslavia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,699	9
Britain	5,570	10	4,656	10	-	-	4,480	10	4,644	10
Taiwan	12,917	5	13,300	4	7,178	6	5,478	8	-	-
Russia	-	-	-	-	4,285	10	-	-	-	-
Hong Kong	29,681	1	22,192	1	8,079	5	-	-	-	-
Top 10 Total	125,299		117,943		87,394		98,344		121,075	
%	55		55		50		52		53	
Other Countries	100,535		97,907		86,686		91,570		105,762	
%	45		45		50		48		47	
Total	225,834		215,850		174,080		189,914		226,837	

Table 2

Source: *Planning Now for Canada's Future*, CIC, 2001

Substantial numbers of newcomers have come from China (including Hong Kong), India and Pakistan. In all of these countries, English is not the first language⁸

For many years, a substantial proportion of newcomers have come to Toronto. In 1999, 83,267 or 44% of all immigrants to Canada settled in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area. The source countries for Toronto are consistent with the immigration patterns to Canada, as can be seen in Table 3.

Immigrants' Top Ten Places of Birth For Those Who Immigrated Between 1991 - 1996 Toronto Census Metropolitan Area, 1996		
Place of Birth	Number	Percentage
Hong Kong	48,500	11%
Sri Lanka	36,700	8%
China	35,300	8%
Philippines	33,200	8%
India	33,200	8%
Poland	18,600	4%
Jamaica	16,800	4%
Countries of former Yugoslavia	13,700	3%
Guyana	13,200	3%
Countries of former USSR	12,900	3%

Table 3

Source: *Recent Immigrants in the Toronto Metropolitan Area: A Comparative Portrait Based on the 1996 Census*, CIC, May 2000

Almost half of the immigrants to Toronto are prime working age (25 - 44). Figure 2 shows that this proportion is higher for immigrants than for the Canadian-born population.

⁸ *CIC News Release*, January 2001

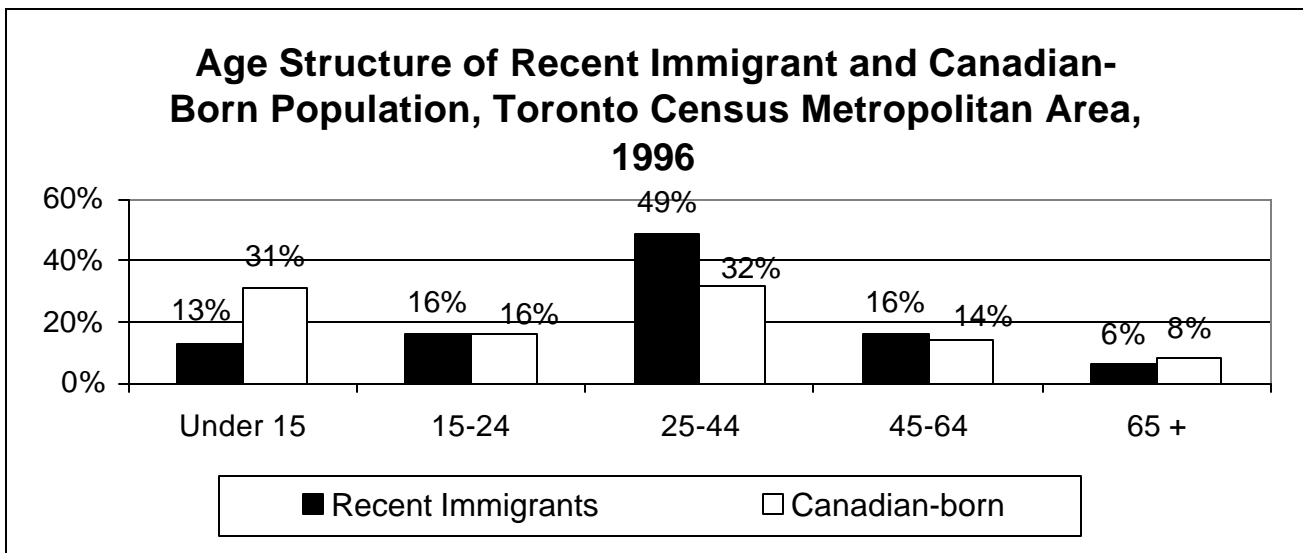


Figure 2

Source: *Recent Immigrants in the Toronto Metropolitan Area: A Comparative Portrait Based on the 1996 Census*, CIC, May 2000

The education levels of newcomers to Toronto are very high and generally tend to exceed the levels present in the Canadian-born population. This is confirmed in a report by Michael Ornstein⁹.

Of those immigrants arriving prior to 1981, 93% could speak one of the official languages. This percentage dropped to 90% for those arriving between 1981 - 1990, and to 86% for those arriving between 1991 - 1996. About two-thirds of immigrants arriving between 1991 and 1996 most often speak a foreign language within their homes.¹⁰

In Table 4, the relationship between knowledge of English and labour force participation rate is illustrated. According to the 1996 Census, those with no English have significantly lower labour force participation rates. Women's rates are below men's rates for every time period shown in the table.

⁹ *Statistics Canada 1996 Census*; Tabulation by Michael Ornstein, York University

¹⁰ *Recent Immigrants in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area: A Comparative Portrait Based on the 1996 Census*, May 2000

Labour Force Participation and Knowledge of English of Persons 15 – 64 years of age Toronto Census Metropolitan Area, 1996				
	Population Share With No English	Labour Force Participation Rate		
		No English	English	Total
Women				
Canadian-born	n.a.	n.a.	76%	76%
Immigrated before 1981	5%	33%	73%	71%
Immigrated 1981-1990	8%	43%	70%	68%
Immigrated 1991-1996	14%	34%	58%	55%
Men				
Canadian-born	n.a.	n.a.	83%	83%
Immigrated before 1981	3%	59%	85%	85%
Immigrated 1981-1990	5%	72%	81%	81%
Immigrated 1991-1996	9%	58%	73%	71%

Table 4

Source: *Recent Immigrants in the Toronto Metropolitan Area: A Comparative Portrait Based on the 1996 Census*, CIC, May 2000

Those who immigrated more recently seem to be facing more labour market difficulties than previously. Immigrants who landed during the 1990s have a lower rate of participation in the labour force, a higher unemployment rate, and jobs requiring lower level of skills than the Canadian-born and earlier immigrants.¹¹

Skilled workers represented about 52% of new immigrants to Canada in 2000 and it is anticipated that skilled workers will continue to represent this proportion of new immigrants in 2001 and 2002¹². Table 6 shows the type of employment of immigrants in 1996, 1997 and 1998.

¹¹ *Recent Immigrants in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area: A Comparative Portrait Based on the 1996 Census*, CIC, May 2000

¹² *CIC News Release*, January 2001

Foreign Workers by Type of Employment 1996 - 1998						
Type of Employment	1996		1997		1998	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Professional Occupations In Art and Culture	9,253	15.4	8,925	14.3	9,127	14.0
Professional Occupations In Natural and Applied Science	5,130	8.6	7,151	11.5	7,682	11.8
Professional Occupations In Social Science, Education, Government and Religion	5,788	9.7	5,721	9.2	5,749	8.8
Professional Occupations In Business and Finance	4,139	6.9	4,556	7.3	5,117	7.9
Technical Occupations Related to Natural and Applied Science	3,727	6.2	3,669	5.9	3,995	6.1
Intermediate Occupations In Primary Industries	2,339	3.9	2,445	3.9	3,669	5.6
Technical and Skilled Occupations In Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport	4,106	6.8	3,595	5.8	3,368	5.2
Intermediate Sales and Service Occupations	2,875	4.8	3,226	5.2	3,361	5.2
Middle and Other Management Occupations	2,337	3.9	2,453	3.9	2,382	3.7
Trades and Skilled Transport and Equipment Operators	1,377	2.3	1,618	2.6	1,737	2.7
Other Types of Employment	18,885	31.5	18,952	30.4	18,961	29.1
Total	59,956	100	62,311	100	65,148	100

Table 5

Source: Canada...The Place To Be, Annual Immigration Plan for the Year 2000, CIC

ISSUES IDENTIFICATION

Arriving in a New Country

According to one focus group participant, "A good time to provide information and counselling is a few days after arrival, when you get your SIN card. You are more settled then; it's too soon at the airport."

Upon arrival at Toronto airport, newcomers are typically given an information package containing material on programs and services that are available to assist newcomers. The package is provided through the Immigrant Reception Information Service (IRIS). IRIS is conscious of the importance of balancing the provision of needed information and the desire not to overwhelm newcomers in their first few hours in Canada.

Armed with this information package, the newcomer leaves the airport to begin life in Canada. In many cases, the initial housing requirements are met by sponsors, friends or relatives. The newcomer then begins the task of addressing other settlement needs. The priorities in this area depend on the circumstances of the individual. In many cases employment is the top priority, driven by economic needs. Others may choose to take English classes prior to seeking employment, and still others will choose to address their more basic needs such as finding their own housing.

Issue 1: Lack of Information prior to arriving in Canada

Some focus group participants and key informants stated that the orientation provided to immigrants before they leave their country was inadequate and in some

One newcomer commented: "Canada should tell prospective immigrants that it's not easy here, the weather is cold and it's hard to get a job."

cases misleading. They cited a lack information on education and training programs, labour market information, occupational information about licensing, and the challenge of finding work in Canada. Some in the focus groups felt that newcomers are mislead prior to coming here; they asserted that life in Canada has been much more difficult than expected.

The report entitled *How Immigrants are Chosen to Come to Canada*¹³ states that immigrants are given mixed messages when they are selected based on their occupation. The report asserts "government sends a thinly veiled message that they will be able to find employment easily in their occupation in Canada. The reality is that it is quite difficult. There are barriers to employment in their fields such as the "Canadian experience" and English level requirements. Even when immigrants are warned that it will not be easy to get employment in Canada, they often discount this because of the fact that they have been selected based on their occupation and therefore conclude that there must be jobs available for them in Canada."

"I need to know about information when I need it - now I know about it but don't need it" said one newcomer we spoke to.

The report *Not Just Numbers*¹⁴ recommends that skilled workers with qualifications and/or experience in regulated trades or professions, especially those which have a mandatory requirement for licensing or registration to practice in Canada, should be required to attend an interview and receive counselling and information regarding the obstacles they will face in working in their profession or trade in Canada.

Our focus groups with newcomers confirmed what was found in other research. The newcomers and Settlement agencies felt that this lack of detailed information prior to arriving in Canada meant that immigrants could not "hit the ground running" when they arrive.

Finding a Job – Early Stages in Canada

The process of job search is challenging for newcomers who are in many cases unfamiliar with Canadian culture, job search techniques, or where to look for employment. A few surpass these challenges and find good jobs in their own field. Many wind up in jobs that are outside their field of expertise. These jobs are generally lower paid and require fewer skills.

¹³ *How Immigrants are Chosen to Come to Canada*, CIC

¹⁴ *Not Just Numbers: A Canadian Framework for Future Immigration*, Robert Trempe, Susan Davis, Roslyn Kunin, 1997

Dr. Edward B. Harvey did a comparative analysis of the International Migration Data Base (IMDB) and the Census of Canada for York Region.¹⁵ From this comparison of occupations, we can see the gap between intended occupations of foreign trained professionals and the actual occupations in York Region. It seems that many professionals do not easily acquire jobs in their intended occupations. Further, the Harvey data indicate, for lower skilled assembly jobs, the reverse phenomenon: many more newcomers find employment in factories than those who arrived intending to do so. We believe that there are similar gaps in Toronto; we state this conclusion based on the focus groups we have done for this study and the focus groups we have carried out with newcomers for other research projects.

Comparative Analysis of the International Migration Data Base (IMDB) and the Census of Canada for York Region				
Selected Occupations	Recent Immigrant IMDB (Intended Occupations)		Recent Immigrants Census 1996 (Actual Occupations)	
	N	%	N	%
Professional Occupations In Business and Finance	215	4%	510	3%
Skilled Administrative and Business Occupations	550	10%	1105	6%
Professional Occupations In Natural and Applied Sciences	600	11%	1065	6%
Professional Occupations In Health	150	3%	335	2%
Professional Occupations In Social Science, Education, Government and Religion	235	4%	635	3%
Processing and Manufacturing Machine Operators and Assemblers	110	2%	1255	7%

Table 6

Issue 2: “Survival” jobs

Because of economic pressures, many newcomers are forced to seek employment as soon as they arrive in Canada. They often end up taking a “survival job”. These jobs are frequently temporary jobs/short term contracts that are not in the individual’s field, and are at relatively low rates of pay.

Others find employment in their field, but not at the level they experienced in their home country. The employers we spoke to acknowledge that many newcomers are working below their competency level. They estimate that between 20 - 30% of their newcomer employees are underemployed.

¹⁵ *Tabulations prepared for the York South Simcoe Training and Adjustment Board, Edward B. Harvey, University of Toronto and Urban Dimensions Group, Inc., January 2000*

A key informant stated, "If you get used to the situation [low language, survival job], it gets even harder to break out."

There are many barriers newcomers face in finding employment in their field including:

- Lack of recognition of credentials
- Weak language skills
- Lack of Canadian experience
- Lack of information
- Financial needs that get in the way of job search
- Not eligible for Employment Insurance courses for upgrading if required until minimum eligibility requirements are met
- Hard to leave the workforce once employed to obtain training in one's own field.

The impacts of taking a survival job can be significant and can seriously affect newcomers' ability to work in their field and to maximize their potential. We heard from newcomers in survival jobs that their technical skills and knowledge begin to erode because they are not being used and at the same time, they are not gaining useable skills and experience. Individuals can experience emotional, psychological, and self-esteem issues and these may spill over into the family setting. They become trapped in a cycle of survival jobs, often being laid off or being passed over for promotions. During this period, they are depleting the money they brought to Canada. Once these funds are exhausted, they may have no means of support in the event they are laid off.

An analysis of the 1996 Census data by M. Ornstein¹⁶ confirms that ethno-racial groups continue to find industrial niches that offer employment to their members, sheltering them from discrimination and providing a more hospitable work environment, but also potentially limiting their mobility into higher-paying jobs in the wider labour market.

Yet another study shows that immigrants settle for jobs in the accommodation, food, and beverages sector because entry costs are low, skill requirements are minimal, and other job opportunities are not available to them. This report further stated that immigrants' continued reliance on manufacturing jobs as a major source of employment, at a time when employment in the sector is declining, renders them vulnerable to layoffs and unemployment. The literature cited in this report suggests that recent immigrants may concentrate in declining economic sectors because they have difficulty satisfying employers' requirements for Canadian experience and

¹⁶ *Ethno-Racial Inequality in Toronto: Analysis of the 1996 Census*, Michael Ornstein, York University

Canadian education and training (Boyd 1991; Reitz 1990; Seward and Tremblay 1987).¹⁷

Other research shows that recent immigrants have experienced a lower average income than their predecessors. While immigrants who came to Toronto before 1961 earned \$35,990 on average, those who arrived from 1961 to 1970 earned \$33,285; 1971 to 1980, \$27,272; 1981 to 1987, \$23,002, and 1988 to 1991, \$18,077. Recent immigrants also have had higher unemployment rates, lower employment incomes, a greater tendency to be poorer than earlier immigrants, and fare worse than non-immigrants and the average Torontonian. It takes between 10 - 20 years of residence in Canada to achieve socioeconomic parity with non-immigrants.¹⁸ These results are somewhat dated; and we do not have more recent information.

Fernando Mata points out that the problem of not assisting international professionals impacts not only on economic productivity but also on issues of social cohesion and immigrant settlement. "As international professionals are forced by circumstances and barriers to take "survival jobs", they experience socio-occupational dislocation and downward social mobility."¹⁹

To further quantify this problem, we look to the CIC report *The Economic Performance of Immigrants Education Perspective*²⁰ which points out that in 1981, immigrant tax filers who had been in Canada for only one year and arrived with a university degree reported employment earnings more than 20% above the average Canadian level. By 1984 earnings were 5% below and by 1992 for immigrants who arrived in 1991 were 30% below the Canadian average. This deterioration is evident for all education levels, but has been more pronounced for those entering the country with a university degree.

An article in the Toronto Star, January 18, 2001, by Haroon Siddiqui stated that "We have been attracting very educated and qualified immigrants. Yet many can't find the right jobs for long periods, if at all." He quoted Jeffrey Reitz, professor at the University of Toronto's Centre for Industrial Relations as saying "this is costing our economy up

¹⁷ *Immigrants' Economic Status in Toronto: Rethinking Settlement and Integration Strategies*, Lucia Lo, Valerie Preston, Shuguang Wang, Katherine Reil, Edward Harvey & Bobby Siu

¹⁸ *Immigrants' Economic Status in Toronto: Rethinking Settlement and Integration Strategies*, Lucia Lo, Valerie Preston, Shuguang Wang, Katherine Reil, Edward Harvey & Bobby Siu

¹⁹ *The Non-Accreditation of Immigrant Professionals in Canada: Societal Dimensions of the problem*, Fernando Mata, 1999

²⁰ *The Economic Performance of Immigrants Education Perspective*, IMDB Profile Series May 1999, CIC

to \$15 billion a year, due to underutilization of immigrant skills and the immigrants themselves \$40 billion, because they are paid less than the Canadian-born. Employers give immigrants only half the earning premiums for education that they give the Canadian-born. For the latter, each additional year of education yields between 5% and 7% greater earnings. But for immigrants, the yield is 2% to 4%.” Mr. Siddiqui went on to say that employers “essentially place little value, or no value, on work experience gained outside Canada.”²¹

We found further support for the underemployment of newcomers in the report entitled *Metro Toronto Immigrant Employment Services Review*²². This report pointed out that immigrants who held jobs in areas of the economy that are shifting or shrinking (e.g. manufacturing, and other low-skilled jobs) will have little or no opportunities for appropriate retraining programs. Immigrants who have arrived in Canada recently will not be able to access any of the federal training or benefits provided by Human Resources Development Canada through the Human Resources Investment Fund (HRIF), as they do not have sufficient employment history to qualify for these services.

One conference attendee stated “newcomers are the best workers we have. They are eager to work long hours and weekends. Our business depends on that.”

The *Newcomer Employment Support Conference: Projects to Support the Employment of Immigrants in the City of Toronto*, held in October 1998 provides us with some insight into employer experiences with respect to hiring newcomers. The employers indicated that they are generally willing to hire newcomers (with some exceptions). However, they do not always have the necessary resources to assist with orientation, training and integration into the workforce.

The conference attendees felt that new immigrants are good workers. New immigrants were said to want to work more than some people who have been here for a long time. The attendees did point out that there are some hiring issues including:

- Language and communication
The employers indicated this was a primary factor affecting employment possibilities. The trend in some small to medium size companies where the employer is an immigrant is to hire workers of the same ethnic and linguistic background.
- Canadian work experience

²¹ Article in *Toronto Star*, January 18, 2001, Haroon Siddiqui

²² *Metro Toronto Immigrant Employment Services Review*, Annamaria Menozzi and Associates, Quail Community Consulting Ltd., January 1997

This referred to knowing about business protocol and work routines. Employers stated that it is hard to verify related work experience and references from another country.

- Employers taking a chance
This referred to the fact that larger companies are more able to absorb financial loss in case of poor performance/inappropriate match of skills to job requirements.
- Adjustment Period
Employers found it is difficult to estimate the period of adjustment, and stated that it varies with the type of job and the applicant's background. Employers must weigh the impact on their resources (e.g. training) and finances.

The conference participants identified the following work challenges for newcomers and their employers:

- Communication
 - language skills
 - writing skills
 - importance varies with type of job
- Computer/software skills
 - knowledge of current operating systems and software
- Field-related Canadian codes and standards
 - systems of measurement (e.g. some trades still use the imperial system)
 - building codes (for construction, engineering and architectural work)
 - security, health, safety, knowledge of laws and regulations
- Over commitment
 - some new immigrants hold 2-3 minimum wage jobs.²³

Issue 3: Accreditation

Obtaining recognition for credentials for foreign-trained professionals is a major challenge. This is compounded for those who are in survival jobs outside of their field.

One of our focus group participants said, "don't bring me here if I can't get work in my field."

²³ Newcomer Employment Support Conference: Projects to Support the Employment of Immigrants in the City of Toronto, October 1998

Our interviews and focus groups revealed some of the barriers employed newcomers face with respect to acquiring recognition of their credentials. These include:

- high cost of the process in some cases (e.g. application fees, translation costs, training costs);
- difficulty finding information about what is required to obtain accreditation;
- unwillingness or inability to spend the time required (sometimes years) to obtain accreditation (particularly when the newcomer is an older worker past 40);
- lack of time or energy to study to prepare for certification after working long hours and tending to family responsibilities.

In one focus group, a participant said, *"I'm going back home soon. My wife can't get work in her field."*

Newcomers who take a survival job often push back issues of accreditation instead of dealing with it early on. It becomes harder to get the accreditation the longer the time spent outside the field. As a result, newcomers can become frustrated and some may even opt to return to their country. Canada and the newcomers are losing these skills. Companies that are employing newcomers in jobs that do not fully utilize their skills will need to find ways to challenge these underemployed newcomers or the company will have frustrated workers and greater turnover.

In one focus group, a newcomer said, *"Even once you get a job here, you won't have Canadian experience in your own profession. It's like chasing wind [to get accepted into your own profession]"*.

The report from the Canadian Labour and Business Centre (CLBC) entitled *Assessing and Recognizing Foreign Credentials in Canada - Employers' Views*²⁴ argues that the growing threat of skill shortages has lent increasing importance to the need to fully use the skills of the Canadian labour force, regardless of where these skills were obtained. In turn, this has made the accurate evaluation of the qualifications of foreign-trained workers even more important. In this same report, some employers indicated that they stressed relevant experience over paper credentials. For example, in the high tech sector where the demand for labour is significant, employers tend to focus on relevant experience and on-the-job demonstration of skills and competence, as well as English skills to determine if a candidate will be productive immediately. In professions where provincial or federal licensing bodies grant formal recognition of credentials (e.g. health, engineering), the interviewed employers felt that the licensing processes were too restrictive.

Assessing and Recognizing Foreign Credentials in Canada - Employers' Views, Derwyn Sangster, Canadian Labour and Business Centre, January 2001

With respect to the requirement for Canadian experience, the employers interviewed for the above-mentioned report pointed out that they do not have information about other countries and the education or job experiences newcomers present to them, so it is not easy to assess equivalency. In some fields, the newcomer can demonstrate skills with equipment such as computers. In other cases, there is still the need to learn the technical aspects of how certain jobs are performed in Canada.

In the final analysis, the CLBC report points out that “for every immigrant who fails to get a job which fully recognizes his/her credentials, there is also an employer who fails to fill a vacancy. The employer suffers directly from the immigrant's lack of credentials recognition, but is unaware of it.”

Working Hard on the Job

Once employed, newcomers are in many cases working long hours trying to make ends meet and to get ahead in the labour market. Some are working at more than one job. Outside of work, they have family responsibilities. This leaves little time or energy to address unresolved settlement issues.

Issue 4: Lack of knowledge about how the “system” works in Canada

We heard repeatedly in our interviews and focus groups that many newcomers lack information about how “things operate” in Canada. Lack of time and energy to devote to finding out about services that are available was cited as one of the primary barriers. Information is not targeted directly to employed newcomers. With more information being made available through the Internet, technology can be a boon for some and a barrier for others. Newcomers who are contending with language barriers can find the Internet a further barrier to acquiring information.

The consensus amongst those we spoke to is that this lack of information slows the integration process in many cases. In the end, many newcomers rely on their personal network because the formal systems are not working for them.

Issue 5: Language Skills

The lack of English language skills is a key issue for many employed newcomers. Language skills refers both to day-to-day and workplace language. In some sectors (e.g. software development), technical language skills take priority. In other sectors (e.g. hospitality, tourism), general language skills take priority, especially if staff are to interact with customers. Workers recognize they need both general and technical language skills; when pressed, they say general language comes first. In some cases,

One focus group participant said, “I’m being held back because my English is still weak.”

pronunciation and accent issues are the predominant problem, rather than comprehension. Newcomers often arrive in Canada with high expectations regarding their language capabilities and then experience the reality of less than adequate skills as they begin to communicate in the workplace.

The employers we spoke to see language as very important, particularly when the job requires that the employee speak to customers. Most employers seem to require some level of English competency as a pre-requisite to hiring.

One employer commented that, "We are starting to say, "you must speak good English before we will hire you"."

The importance of addressing language training prior to employment where possible is a key component of this issue. There were many barriers to acquiring English language skills cited in our discussions with newcomers, settlement agencies and other key informants. The fact that more newcomers express interest in language training than actually attend may be evidence that there are barriers to attending, according to our key informants. The specific barriers identified in our study are:

- the lack of income support for language training prior to obtaining employment;
- working long hours impedes opportunities for training (both language and professional development);
- low energy levels and limited time once employed; and
- working with others who speak the same language slows the acquisition of English skills.

Our information sources were split on whether newcomers should first learn English or get a job. Those who say language first felt newcomers could not get the job they want without strong English skills. They also felt knowing English improved self-confidence. The reality for many newcomers is that the tremendous pressure to generate income and/or be seen to be working puts English second.

The impacts of not having strong English skills are many. Based on our discussions with newcomers, employers and settlement agencies we see this as the key issue facing employed newcomers. Newcomers in need of English upgrading are often trapped in survival jobs. Their language skills improve slowly or not at all and in turn the integration process is slowed. The newcomer often experiences social isolation, particularly if he/she does not have a support network of family and friends. The lack of strong English skills creates a barrier to full participation in life in Canada.

In the workplace, we heard stories of injured workers attributable to an inability to comprehend safety instructions. There is also a feeling among some we interviewed

that newcomers lacking in English are not as productive as they could be. The ultimate impact is that the newcomer does not reach his/her full potential.

These comments about the importance of English skills are supported by findings in the report *Assessing and Recognizing Foreign Credentials in Canada - Employers' Views*. In this report, the IT sector employers identified priority characteristics that a potential employee must have to be immediately useful. At the top of this list is the need for English communication skills (to be able to function as a team member).²⁵

In *Ethno-Racial Inequality in Toronto: Analysis of the 1996 Census*²⁶, Michael Ornstein reports that 6.1% of the population (145,000) said that they do not speak English. The highest concentration of non-English speakers was among the Chinese; 22.8% did not speak English. The estimated 48,525 Chinese who in 1996 did not speak English constituted about 30% of all non-English speakers in the City. The proportions of non-English speakers were also high for the Vietnamese and Koreans, 18.2% and 16.1% respectively, corresponding to 4,560 and 3,495 individuals. According to Mr. Ornstein, learning the language is intimately connected to economic and social integration. He acknowledges that in Toronto it is possible to find work and conduct everyday transactions without knowing English. But, it is not hard to make the case that “the inability to speak English is a significant form of personal dis-empowerment, for women and men, of all ages.”

CIC points to the acquisition of English or French as a critical factor contributing to economic independence and to participation in the broader Canadian society.²⁷ This same conclusion is drawn by the Canadian Council for Refugees who state that speaking the language of the host society is a fundamental key to participation in that society.²⁸

The report *After the Door has been Opened, Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees in Canada*,²⁹ gives us some insight into the emotional impacts of not speaking the language of the host country. The report states that an

²⁵ *Assessing and Recognizing Foreign Credentials in Canada - Employers' Views*, Derwyn Sangster, Canadian Labour and Business Centre, January 2001

²⁶ *Ethno-Racial Inequality in Toronto: Analysis of the 1996 Census*, Michael Ornstein, York University

²⁷ *Measuring Performance*, Elizabeth Ruddick, CIC, March 1998

²⁸ *Best Settlement Practices*, Canadian Council for Refugees, February 1998

²⁹ *After the Door has been Opened, Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees in Canada*, 1988

inability to speak English or French is among the most powerful predictors of emotional stress among migrants.

A report on immigrant employment services in Toronto also concludes that language is a crucial factor in determining the success of an individual's ability to secure and advance in employment.³⁰ Even those newcomers with language abilities and high levels of education still face major barriers in Metro Toronto if their level of English is not sufficient to communicate their high technical knowledge in a Metro Toronto work context. Self-doubt, anxiety, and self-consciousness are experienced by non-English or French speakers when they interact with others, due to what this report calls "second language anxiety".

The report *Not Just Numbers* proposes that more importance be attached to official language ability.³¹ This report reinforces the notion that ability in at least one of the official languages is a key determinant of success, in both employment and successful integration.³² In 1996, according to CIC's data, more than 6% of skilled workers had no knowledge of English or French, and the figures were substantially higher for entrepreneurs (50%) and investors (66%).

The *Not Just Numbers* report recommends that the core standard for official language ability should be proficiency (meaning a level of fluency sufficient to enter the Canadian labour force) in at least one of the two official languages. This should be demonstrated through formal, standardized testing.³³

A hotel employer interviewed said, "A guest may ask, 'How do I get to City Hall?'. If you can't answer that, we can't have you in a job that interacts with our customers."

Issue 6: Lack of understanding of the Culture

This issue refers to Canadian culture as well as workplace culture. Disentangling lack of Canadian experience, weak language skills and lack of cultural awareness is difficult. Pressing income issues often get in the way of taking the time for orientation sessions that could provide information on the Canadian and workplace culture. This issue was seen to slow the integration process and isolate the newcomer at work and in society.

The remaining issues were mentioned less frequently in our research and for the most part were raised by individuals and organizations who are in some ways advocates for

³⁰ *Metro Toronto Immigrant Employment Services Review*, Annamaria Menozzi and Associates, Quail Community Consulting Ltd., January 1997

³¹ *Citizenship and Immigration Canada (Landed Immigrant Data Systems: LIDS)*

³² *Not Just Numbers: A Canadian Framework for Future Immigration*, Robert Trempe, Susan Davis, Roslyn Kunin, 1997

³³ *Not Just Numbers: A Canadian Framework for Future Immigration*, Robert Trempe, Susan Davis, Roslyn Kunin, 1997

newcomers. Although not mentioned as frequently, they are none-the-less important to the successful integration of newcomers and are relevant to employed newcomers.

Issue 7: Rights

A lack of knowledge of rights including human rights and employment rights was seen to be an issue for employed newcomers. Further, there may be a reluctance to speak up or inability to speak up in the workplace when it is possible that the individual's rights are being violated. For example, we heard of instances where newcomers had difficulty accessing Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). There were two barriers to accessing WSIB mentioned: the claim process is totally computerized, and some employers encourage workers not to claim WSIB.

Issue 8: Housing

Even newcomers who are employed may not be able to access housing through normal means. Newcomers and settlement agencies told us that newcomers often require evidence of long-term employment in Canada to obtain a mortgage or sign a lease for rental accommodation. They may also be required to have a co-signer or guarantor. Newcomers also face long waiting lists for low-cost housing, sometimes up to 5 years according to some newcomers. An additional barrier to finding accommodation is having to pay first and last month rent which presents a financial barrier for some. Most newcomers find ways to address their housing needs through their family or personal contacts. They typically do not resolve this through the private rental system or public low cost housing.

A report on housing experiences of new Canadians³⁴ provided us with additional understanding of the housing issue. Its focus group findings identified the following barriers leading to differential access to housing:

- Income Levels:
 - rent-to-income ratio requirement
 - assurance of stable income
 - proof of the level of income
 - co-signer as a guarantor

- Knowledge of Housing System:
 - lack of knowledge about how the housing system works
 - limited personal or institutional assistance
 - lack of knowledge of rights and responsibilities as a tenant

³⁴ *Immigrants and Access to Housing: How Welcome are Newcomers to Canada?*, J. David Hulchanski, University of Toronto, 1997

- Categories of knowledge many newcomers lack:
 - city in general and of individual neighbourhoods in particular
 - types of housing available
 - the best way to conduct a housing search and negotiate with a landlord
 - rent levels and related transaction costs
 - housing rights and responsibilities

- Language and Accent:
 - various degrees of fluency, from not speaking English at all to not being able to understand well to concern about not being understood
 - finding housing and negotiating tenancy requires mastery of the language

- Social Housing Wait Lists:
 - chronological access means that newcomers can wait for many years

- Knowledge of Institutions and Culture:
 - differences between institutional arrangements.

According to the housing report, these barriers lead to a situation in which newcomers often end up with the least desirable housing units in the least desirable areas. Strong networks and contacts (friends and relatives) facilitate the search for housing. The report did point out that not all immigrant groups have the same experience with the housing system and not all the barriers are experienced in the same way for each group.

Issue 9: Health Care Coverage

There is a period of time after arrival when newcomers are not eligible for OHIP coverage for health care even if employed. There are some sources of help, but the problem is that newcomers do not always know of other options available to them e.g. community health clinics. The result is that in some cases newcomers tend to remain silent about medical problems.

Issue 10: Childcare

Access to affordable childcare becomes an issue particularly in families where both parents are seeking to work or one or more are employed. There are many barriers to accessing childcare including:

- working long hours beyond typical daycare hours;
- lack of affordable daycare;
- hard to get a subsidy – there is a lengthy wait list;
- possessing \$5000 in assets renders the newcomer ineligible for a subsidy.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Existing Programs and Services

A newcomer in one focus group said "if all workplaces in Canada were like this company, Canada would be the best country all over the world and the richest and maybe the strongest." This company hires large numbers of newcomers and provides language training on company time.

Once employed, many newcomers must access programs and services designed for all newcomers as there appear to be few programs directed specifically to employed newcomers. We did hear about model employers who are providing support and assistance to the newcomers they hire. We were told about newcomers in the Live-in Caregiver Program who have wonderfully supportive employers and a support group sponsored by a community agency. In all these cases the employers understood the needs of the newcomer and were providing programs themselves such as orientation and language training provided in the workplace and outside of the workplace or made it possible for the newcomer to access assistance outside the workplace.

On the other hand, we heard an equal number of stories about employers who simply want the newcomer to do his/her job. They see the individual as being responsible for his/her own integration.

Settlement Agencies

In the community there is an extensive Settlement infrastructure. In 2001 there are 39 agencies funded under ISAP in Toronto to deliver services to newcomers. Many of these agencies have attempted to accommodate the needs of employed newcomers by making their services available outside normal work hours. However, the newcomers we spoke to, in many cases, did not know about Settlement agencies. Without targeting information to employed newcomers, it is likely they will not be aware of what assistance is available. Further, as noted earlier, they are often unfamiliar with how the "system" works in Canada, which makes it more difficult to find information and assistance.

Individual Programs

We did find some examples of partnerships between employers and the school boards to deliver language training in the workplace. In one case we heard that if the employer can meet the participation threshold of 15 employees as required by the

school board, the training is provided free of charge. These partnerships seem to be successful from the perspective of the employers and the newcomers.

Another example is a new LINC program that will be piloted by Skills For Change. The program is aimed at employed newcomers and is called “Advanced Communication in the Workplace for Working People”. This program combines language training with training on workplace culture and other related workplace issues.

There are a couple of programs that are targeted to newcomers but not specifically to employed newcomers. Although these programs are useful they may not always be accessible. One such example is the Sector Specific Terminology, Information and Counselling project (STIC), which provides workshops and resources designed to speed up entry of foreign-trained individuals into four sectors of the labour market: accounting, engineering, health care, and automotive service. This project has been delivered for a number of years by Skills For Change in Toronto. A consortium in Hamilton has run a similar program that provides a model for a smaller community collaborative approach. Partners in this initiative are Settlement & Integration Services Organization, Mohawk College, St. Charles Adult Education Centre, and Hamilton-Wentworth Local Training Board.³⁵

The STEPS TO EMPLOYMENT workshops target the needs of newcomers with basic proficiency in English, integrate orientation and sector-specific language training. Although the materials are designed to enrich the LINC program in Ontario, employers, recruiters, unions and trainers who wish to provide newcomers with an intensive, sector-specific language training workshop may also find the materials useful.

Our conclusion is that although there are individual examples of programs for employed newcomers, Toronto lacks a comprehensive newcomer workplace programs and services strategy. The current approach does not appear to be sufficient to enable employed newcomers to maximize their potential in Canada.

³⁵ *The Search, JSW Newsletter*, Vol. 1, Issue 2

Advice for Program and Service Decision Makers

Types of Programs and Services Needed

One focus group participant said, "we'd work for free to get experience, for example through co-op program."

The organizations and individuals we spoke to offered several suggestions regarding the types of programs and services required by employed newcomers. These suggestions included the following:

- Workplace language training programs was the greatest settlement need identified in the course of this study. Workplace language training was considered feasible by some employers on a shared time and cost basis. However, there are challenges such as space in which to hold the training, out-of-pocket cost if the employer has to pay, and the difficulty facing small companies in supporting any workplace initiative.
- Providing more information about settlement programs and services available to assist employed newcomers. Although not specifically about employed newcomers, there was some mention of providing additional information, beyond what is already offered, when newcomers first arrive at Pearson Airport. In this way newcomers would know more about the agencies and the types of services available in the event that they should need them.
- Internships were seen as a valuable type of program to enable newcomers to gain Canadian experience.
- Building on company orientations by adding a component just for newcomers such as diversity training, cultural training in the workplace, information on workers rights, health and safety, and stress management in the workplace.
- Opportunities for networking were mentioned frequently by newcomers and settlement agencies as valuable in assisting newcomers with settlement and integration.
- Newcomer support groups and mentoring programs were seen as helpful in the integration process. These support groups and mentoring relationships could assist the newcomer in learning about the workplace and Canadian culture and could be a source of information on how and where to find information about programs and services. Foreign-trained professionals, in particular, could benefit from a mentoring relationship with someone in their field. A mentor could assist with

information about how to gain recognition of credentials and be helpful in finding employment advancement in that field. AT THEIR LEVEL

- Workplace cultural sensitivity training was identified as a settlement service required by employed newcomers.
- The support and participation of unions in the design and delivery of workplace programming is essential in organized workplaces.

In the report *Issues and Prospects, The Funding & Delivery of Immigrant Services in the context of Cutbacks, Devolution & Amalgamation*³⁶, the service needs of newcomers were presented against three stages of integration:

- "In the immediate stage, newcomers require a range of services, such as: shelter, food, clothing, information and orientation, and other essential "reception" or early settlement services.
- In the intermediate stage, immigrants learn more about how to access and enroll in a number of Canadian systems, starting with language classes, upgrading training and education, health, housing and legal systems.
- The long-term stage involves diverse and much more differentiated elements that facilitate the long-term participation of individual immigrants in Canadian society."

In the Workplace or Outside the Workplace

Two views of focus group participants; "In my case, if I was the only one who needed English, I'd be singled out if I took lessons and I wouldn't like that."
"Yes absolutely I would go to English classes at work."

There was considerable debate in our consultations about whether programs should be provided in the workplace or outside of the workplace. Those who expressed the view that workplace programs are an effective model indicated that newcomers could not afford to take evening classes with a fee. It was also mentioned that newcomers had family responsibilities that would make it difficult for them to participate in programs in the evening or on weekends. It was therefore better to offer them during the business day/at the end of the business day. In addition, there was thought to be benefit in learning along with colleagues.

Those who thought programs in the workplace were not a good idea explained that newcomers are already spending too much time in the workplace and additional time for programs would not be welcomed. Some newcomers said that they would be

³⁶ *Issues & Prospects. The Funding & Delivery of Immigrant Services in the context of Cutbacks, Devolution & Amalgamation*, Mwarigha M.S., September 1997

intimidated to take programs designed for them in the workplace. They did not want to be seen by their colleagues or employers to need special programs.

Suggestions for Effective Program and Service Design

The following suggestions to decision-makers regarding the design of programs and services were identified through our interviews with key informants and settlement agencies.

Targeting information to employed newcomers. This could be accomplished by agencies providing information in the workplace. This could also be accomplished by providing employers with information about the agencies that could then be posted within the company.

Providing free evaluation of credentials. Recognition of credentials was identified as a major settlement issue for many employed newcomers working in survival jobs or underemployed. One of the barriers to gaining recognition was the cost, which can be a significant problem for newcomers with low incomes and family responsibilities.

In the report on *Best Settlement Practices*³⁷ we learn of additional suggestions for designing programs and services including:

- The importance of designing programs that respond to the needs as defined by newcomers themselves.
- Taking into account the complex, multifaceted, interrelated dimensions of settlement and integration and responding as possible to a variety of needs at once.

From the *Newcomer Employment Support Conference*³⁸ we have gleaned these additional suggestions:

- Need for placement services which sensitize employers to the needs of newcomers.
- Partnerships need to be established between employers and community organizations.
- Service providers should provide the link between employers and mentors.

³⁷ *Best Settlement Practices*, Canadian Council for Refugees, February 1998

³⁸ *HRDC Newcomer Employment Support Conference*, October, 1998

- HRDC should offer language and communication courses.
- Make government assistance available to smaller businesses.
- Provide internship programs to help newcomers gather Canadian work experience.
- HRDC should help companies with the training of newcomers.

INSIGHTS FROM OTHER JURISDICTIONS

As part of our research, we reviewed various documents and reports from other jurisdictions. We focussed particularly on countries that have, as Canada does, relatively “open” borders i.e. countries that actively seek immigrants in order to bolster their economic and/or social progress. We included on that list Israel, New Zealand, and Norway. Each country has its own unique circumstances. For example, Israel is the homeland of right for Jewish people and New Zealand is a small island country. We have attempted to glean from our reading various insights that may be of interest to those who work in the area of settlement and integration in Canada. Below we present what we believe to be the most salient findings from this review, selected from some, but not all the documents; the reader can consult the appendix for a bibliography of all the documents reviewed.

Increasing Competition For Immigrants

A report on New Zealand³⁹ suggested that countries may be entering a world in which there will be increasing competition for immigrants. As transportation becomes easier and relatively cheaper, more people will consider migrating. The increasing income differentials between the developed and the developing countries will also encourage migration. Further, the emergence of the Internet as a source of instant, comprehensive information will also play a role. This report argues that the efforts a country makes to assist newcomers will become more of a factor in the immigrant’s choice of country.

Language Acquisition Is Seen As Paramount

Almost every report we reviewed emphasized the importance of language acquisition to successful settlement and integration. The report on New Zealand cited above stated that proficiency in the host country language is of over-riding importance. A report from Norway⁴⁰ concluded that third world immigrant men who take more than basic language training (i.e. 240 hours) speak better Norwegian and earn more than those who take fewer hours. This

³⁹ *Migrant Settlement: A review of the literature and its relevance to New Zealand*, Michael Fletcher, September 1999

⁴⁰ *Language Training, Language Proficiency and Earnings: Lessons from Norway*, John E Hayfron, March 1998

report emphasized the importance of language in the labour market; it stated that “immigrants need to acquire language skills to be able to obtain relevant information about jobs and earnings, and to communicate their pre-existing skills to potential employers in the labour market”. In Israel, it is reported that “employment, language and social absorption are regarded as interwoven”.⁴¹

Similar conclusions can be found in reports emanating from within Canada. For instance, the Canadian Council on Refugees in its document entitled *Best Settlement Practices* stated that “speaking the language of the host society is clearly a fundamental key to participation in that society”.⁴² A report from British Columbia regarding foreign-trained professionals concluded that many of them lacked technical language.⁴³ A CIC document we reviewed called *Measuring Performance* stated the proposition succinctly: “Acquisition of English or French is considered a critical factor contributing to economic independence and to participation in the broader Canadian society”.⁴⁴

Some Countries Require Language Training

Some countries have matched their rhetoric about the importance of learning the host language with policies designed to ensure language acquisition. In Norway, government policy now requires immigrants to participate fully in language training programs.⁴⁵ Public sector transfers are contingent on being active in language training or formal education. In Israel, Hebrew language acquisition for adults is considered essential and is the responsibility of the state.⁴⁶ Six months of intensive language training is provided, accompanied by income support from the state.

Settlement And Integration Remain As A Challenge For Many Immigrants

A number of reports have commented on the difficulties faced by newcomers and the “long haul” they have in becoming fully settled and integrated into the host society. Some reports estimate very lengthy durations. For instance, the BC report cited above states that it has

⁴¹ *Immigration to Israel: Any Lessons for Canada?*, Iris Geva-May, January 1998

⁴² *Best Settlement Practices*, Canadian Council for Refugees, February 1998

⁴³ *Initiatives Affecting the Labour Market Integration of Foreign Trained Professionals and Trade Workers*, Prepared for the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC, March 2000

⁴⁴ *Measuring Performance*, Elizabeth Ruddick, CIC, March 1998

⁴⁵ *Language Training, Language Proficiency and Earnings: Lessons from Norway*, John E Hayfron, March, 1998

⁴⁶ *Language Training, Language Proficiency and Earnings: Lessons from Norway*, John E Hayfron, March, 1998

taken immigrants about 15 years to achieve the incomes and employment rates of Canadian-born workers. The New Zealand report placed the estimate at over 20 years.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

In this section we draw conclusions arising from the findings of the study. We did not uncover a whole host of problems, concerns and issues unique to employed newcomers. As a result, the conclusions that we are presenting could, in most cases, be applied to all newcomers. However, our sense is that becoming employed did not automatically resolve settlement issues. On the contrary, our sense is that resolving settlement issues becomes more difficult and may take more time once a newcomer becomes employed. Newcomers themselves may not even recognize or are reluctant to state that they have unresolved settlement issues. As we probed, we did uncover examples of issues that fit into the category of settlement. We note, for example, one mother who did not know where to turn for emergency dental assistance for her young son who was not covered by OHIP. More frequently we heard of individuals who were quite confused about how to take even the first step in getting their credentials assessed.

We began this report with five questions that helped to frame this research. By way of a summary, we would like to return to these questions now and provide a general response to each based on our research. This section is followed by a more detailed listing of conclusions and recommendations. As readers consider these questions and answers you may conclude as we did that the needs of employed newcomers are essentially the same as for all newcomers but it may be that the access routes for service need to be customized to their circumstances.

1. Are there unresolved settlement issues?

We conclude that there are significant unresolved settlement issues in at least the following areas:

- Language
- Accreditation
- Lack of understanding of workplace culture
- Difficulty finding information about programs and services.

2. What is the impact on the newcomer, the employer, and society?

The impact on the newcomer is that they are not able to maximize their full potential. The impact is not only economic, on the individual and his/her family, but also emotional in terms of the well-being of the newcomer and his/her family.

Employers have difficulty assessing and verifying qualifications and experience from other countries, which impacts on their ability to make full use of the skills of newcomers hired.

Society has invested in bringing newcomers to Canada with the skills that are needed to enable Canada to grow and prosper. These unresolved settlement issues keep society from benefiting from that investment in human capital.

3. Do these settlement issues get resolved?

Although we cannot answer this conclusively, it would appear that in many cases the settlement issues do get resolved over time. Our sense is that some of the issues may be resolved through informal networks as in the case of housing. Others may be minimized over time through exposure as in the case of understanding the workplace culture. Whether ultimately resolved or not, a prolonged integration period creates a loss to the newcomer in terms of economic and social participation and a waste of human capital from society's perspective.

4. What services are available to assist employed newcomers?

We conclude that there is an infrastructure of agencies and individual programs providing services to newcomers and in some cases employed newcomers. What appears to be lacking is a comprehensive programs and services strategy that is targeting employed newcomers in order to facilitate their access.

5. What kind of assistance do employed newcomers need?

We conclude that there is a need for workplace-based programs and services. We heard of some employers who are sponsoring workplace programs. We talked with other employers who were willing to consider workplace programs. In newcomer focus groups we heard that newcomers would be willing to invest some of their own time in workplace-based programs. The prime area of interest for newcomers and employers is language training although there was some interest in information sessions about available programs and services that support newcomers. We recognize that there are problems inherent in workplace programming such as scheduling, the split between paid and unpaid time, who bears the cost of instruction, and the ability of small business to participate.

Within the major questions posed for this report we have identified 12 recommendations about the settlement and integration needs of employed newcomers. These are presented below.

Recommendations

The disconnect between employed newcomers and settlement issues

As we progressed with this research project, it became clear that the connection between workplace and settlement issues did not resonate readily with employers or newcomers and even settlement agencies had difficulty connecting the two thoughts. In the case of the newcomers we spoke to, many were not forthcoming with information on settlement issues. It is not clear if this is because they had no unresolved settlement issues or if it is because they are hesitant to mention they have issues or perhaps they don't associate settlement issues with the workplace. It is tempting therefore to think that once a newcomer has obtained employment that most settlement issues are resolved. However, as noted above, when we prodded we were able to uncover examples of unresolved issues.

Recommendation #1: It is recommended that careful consideration be given to further defining the settlement needs of employed newcomers.

Maximizing human capital - we're not there yet

Every indication is that the number of immigrants to Canada will increase in the future. One report, as noted earlier, concludes that Canada may in fact require even greater numbers of immigrants than CIC's targets to meet labour force demands. Those immigrating have more qualifications than before and yet we are seeing less parity between the Canadian-born workforce and recent immigrants. It would appear therefore that we are falling even further behind in maximizing the human capital of newcomers.

The findings of this study support the notion that we have an immigration system that values the skills of newcomers but needs to do more to assist immigrants to maximize the use of these same skills.

Recommendation #2: It is recommended that the support available to newcomers be better aligned with the stated objectives of Canada's immigration policy.

Preparing to come to Canada

One focus group participant commented, "Canada can only do so much. People should prepare in advance.... Get yourself organized before you leave your home country."

We did learn of some newcomers who had found information on the Internet or through agencies, family and friends prior to coming to Canada. Potential immigrants need to be supported in their decisions to immigrate to Canada with access to comprehensive information and be encouraged to conduct their own research in preparation for immigrating.

Recommendation #3: It is recommended that more comprehensive information about labour market realities be provided to prospective immigrants and that they be counselled on how to research information before making their decision to immigrate.

Targeting information to employed newcomers

It became clear in our research that employed newcomers face tremendous challenges in accessing information on programs and services that could assist them. This is a problem for all newcomers; the time restrictions for employed newcomers imposed by virtue of being employed make it doubly difficult. CIC has recently announced the establishment of Newcomer Information Centres (NICs) in Toronto and Peel. While NICs will address some of the information needs of newcomers, we are still of the view that special efforts are required to reach employed newcomers.

According to one newcomer who attended a focus group, "We do need more information. Agencies could come to the workplace to tell us."

Recommendation #4: It is recommended that settlement agencies be supported to undertake outreach to employed newcomers and to provide specific information targeted to the needs of employed newcomers.

The importance of speaking the language of the host country

All evidence in this study points to the negative impacts of weak English or French skills on the integration of newcomers and their ability to maximize their potential. In this report we have cited numerous reports as well as comments from our interviews and focus groups that reinforce the value of early acquisition of official language skills.

One employer interviewed said, “*The only thing holding some workers back is their level of English.*”

Recommendation #5: It is recommended that the federal government review its language policy with a view to encouraging and supporting accessible and flexible language training as early as possible after arrival in the country.

Recognition of credentials is still an issue

Recognition of credentials was not a specific focus of this study. It has been addressed in other reports, much work has been done in this area, a unit within the provincial government has been established to address this issue, and it is generally a well-known proposition. Nevertheless, the problems associated with recognition of credentials did emerge throughout our research and we feel compelled to include it here. The issues included a lack of information about how to obtain accreditation, the cost, and the time and energy required to gain recognition.

Recommendation #6: It is recommended that greater effort be made in getting information to employed newcomers about the accreditation process and that ways to enhance accessibility of the process by employed newcomers be considered.

The value of workplace culturalization

In the course of this study, we heard about how a lack of awareness or understanding of the workplace culture can impact on an employed newcomer’s advancement in a company and may affect employment retention. On a more emotional level, we heard of the isolation that can result from cultural differences.

Recommendation #7: It is recommended that program deliverers attempt to build additional information about workplace culture into existing programs such as language training.

Employer education and awareness

Although we were challenged to find employers to participate in this research project, we did hear of model employers from newcomers themselves and from other key informants. These employers not only see the benefits of hiring newcomers but they are also willing to invest in these people through supports such as language training, comprehensive employee orientation and other forms of support. There are also

employers who do not see the potential return on investment if they incur substantial costs to assist their newcomer employees to further integrate into the workplace and/or to maximize their skills.

Recommendation #8: It is recommended that an awareness raising campaign targeted at employers be implemented. The experiences of model employers could be built into the campaign to illustrate the benefits to the employer and to the employee.

Advice for programs and services decision makers

As mentioned above, there is a need for workplace programs. However, there are several challenges inherent in delivering programs in the workplace, some of which emanate from the employers and some from the employees themselves. Program designers need to understand the many challenges in a workplace setting.

Recommendation #9: It is recommended that any consideration of new programs and services in the workplace be done in consultation with employers, unions, employees and agencies.

More work still to be done

This study set out to do an initial exploration of the issue of unresolved settlement needs amongst employed newcomers. Our conclusion is that there are indeed unresolved issues that are not currently being adequately addressed by existing programs and services. The next step, in our view, is to focus in on two key areas identified as issues in this study, language training and information.

Recommendation #10: It is recommended that further work be done on language training for employed newcomers and targeting information to employed newcomers as it is our observation that these are the greatest area of need.

APPENDIX A: ISAP-Funded Agencies Interview List

Bloor Information & Life Skills Centre

Catholic Cross Cultural Services

India Rainbow Community Services

Intercede

Jamaican Canadian Association

Rexdale Women's Centre

Tamil Eelam Society

Woodgreen Community Centre

Working Women's Community Centre

YMCA of Greater Toronto

APPENDIX B: List of Key Informants

Acs, Kate - Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, Access to Professions and Trades
Canic, Katarina – YMCA, LINC Assessment Centre
Carazino, Victor – United Food and Commercial Workers
Chan, Gloria – Homeworkers Association (Union of Needle Trades)
Chorlton, Julie – Preparatory Training Project
Clifford, Sandra – Ontario Federation of Labour
Crockford, Ron – HRDC
Cronin, David – HRDC
Dupuis, Robert – Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, Literacy
Guy, Florence –
Hsu-Holmes, Grace – Immigrant Reception and Information Service
Kopkov, C. – Board of Education
Kothringer, Ed – jobStart (formerly CAWL)
Levine, Tamara – Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)
Madhany, Shamira – Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, Access to Professions and Trades
Mason, Alan – Lakeside HRCC
Owen, Tim – World Education Service (WES)
Richmond, Ted – University of Toronto
Tsegaye, Mengis – LASI World Skills
Yen, Maggie – Carpenters Local 27

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