

Feasibility Study for a Pan-Canadian Settlement Organization

Project Report

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Joint Planning Committee
National Settlement Conference II*

Policy Solutions Consulting

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Introduction

Recent developments in the settlement services and voluntary sector in Canada, such as ongoing work under the Voluntary Sector Initiative, planning for the second National Settlement Conference, and discussions exploring possible outcomes from these initiatives, have raised again the issue of the need for a distinct pan-Canadian “voice” or “body” for the immigrant settlement sector in Canada. To explore this issue, a national ad-hoc committee was formed from the Joint Planning Committee for the National Settlement Conference II. This report was commissioned to explore the feasibility of moving towards this goal.

This report is based on an environmental scan and a summary of relevant research as well as the results of a survey and various interviews and focus groups. The survey questionnaire focused on broad priorities and general organizational options, while the interviews and focus groups provided a more in-depth examination of different models of pan-Canadian consultation and organization.

This research was conducted with the long-term perspective of promoting a reasoned public discussion on ways to maximize the benefits of improved settlement to both newcomers and Canadian society. The results show that there is a general consensus that the settlement process in Canada needs a new orientation, and that there are many potential allies for the community-based settlement services sector in developing this new orientation. The question of what kind of organization or coordination would aid this process gives rise to differing opinions, which vary to some degree by region as well as by individual.

The mandate for this project included a commitment to distribute this report widely for feedback, and to develop a mechanism to allow the settlement sector to provide direct input into the orientations that are chosen. All those who have participated – and any other stakeholders or potential partners who are interested in the issue – are encouraged to review and comment on the final product.

Background

Prior to conducting this feasibility study, a preliminary survey was carried out by the national ad-hoc committee formed from the Joint Planning Committee for the National Settlement Conference II. This initiative was led by settlement sector representatives, without government representation or funding. Members chose to define the settlement sector in broad terms to include immigrant and refugee serving agencies, language and employment service providers, sponsorship agreement holders, community colleges, private sector institutions, and provincial umbrella organizations.

The ad-hoc committee designed and distributed a survey question to elicit initial response to the idea/possible need for a distinct national ISA “voice” or “body”. With broad regional and sector response, 81% of the 81 returned surveys responded in the affirmative. Response from Quebec, however, was minimal. The necessity of further study and further consultation was established by the ad-hoc committee on the basis of this survey.

This current report therefore represents a second stage – not the last – in this process of examining the feasibility of developing a new “voice” for the settlement sector at the pan-Canadian level. The surveys and interviews were conducted with a sampling of persons active in the provision of settlement services across Canada, both inside and outside the community-based immigrant service sector. The identification of potential respondents was developed by the research team in consultation with the project steering committee members, with the goal of having a good representation of the diverse regions across Canada as well as the different types of settlement work in which people are engaged. The results of the surveys and interviews are presented in this report; the details are confidential.

Current Challenges in Settlement

The State of Settlement in Canada

Canada has benefited enormously from immigration and continues to date to base its economic and demographic policies on relatively high levels of immigration. But for the last decade, at least, settlement has become much more challenging in Canada, and the service system provided through community-based agencies has come under increasing stress.

It is essential to recognize that for newcomers to Canada, the *settlement process is a lifelong journey*. Some aspects of the process will even continue into the second- or third-generation, e.g. issues of curriculum and equity within the school system, or the significance of “multiculturalism” for racialised communities. We might think of this process as including *three main stages*. The first stage of initial reception (information and referral, language training, short-term shelter etc.) is the one for which CIC is mainly responsible. The middle stage of the process involves securing long-term access to appropriate employment as well as housing, education etc., for all members of the newcomers’ families. In the third stage newcomers develop some sense of attachment or “belonging” in Canada – without giving up their ethnoracial identities and their ties to their homelands. In this latter stage they combat various forms of discrimination and institutional barriers to become fully engaged as active citizens.

If we look at settlement as involving this kind of extended process, then it becomes clear that a major part of the current failures of settlement in Canada is due to the lack on an integrated and comprehensive settlement policy. The parameters for “settlement policy” involve much more than the basic “reception” stage mandated to

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and some provincial government departments. Other essential areas include:

- The challenges of newcomer labour market integration and the recognition of the internationally-acquired skills and education of newcomers
- The education of newcomer children and youth
- Municipal governance and related issues of inter-governmental relations
- Issues of social citizenship, including anti-racism, that are more complex than the promotion of basic tolerance and diversity

As a consequence therefore the development of an integrated and successful settlement policy requires the involvement of not only CIC and the community-based settlement sector but also:

- Various federal departments other than CIC
- Various provincial and territorial government departments other than those mandated to deal with “settlement” or “citizenship” issues, especially those dealing with education, training, economic development, and labour market issues
- Municipal governments
- Various local, regional, provincial and pan-Canadian advocacy organizations dealing with settlement-related issues including employment, equity, anti-racism and refugee rights

Community-based Settlement Agencies Under Stress

Canada is also unique in that a major portion of settlement services are provided by community-based or “third sector” agencies (Immigrant Service Agencies or ISAs) with funding from our three levels of government, as well as community charities and public and private foundations. Historically this model of service delivery has served Canada’s newcomers rather well, and the community-based settlement sector has accumulated a wealth of experience and expertise to contribute to improved settlement outcomes.¹ Nevertheless, we must recognize that this system of service provision is increasingly under stress for a variety of inter-related reasons:

- The shift from stable or “core” to time-delimited and restrictive contract funding for NGO service delivery, is intensifying the existing problems for service agencies in matching limited resources to expanded demand
- A general confusion between administrative and public accountability in the current interpretation of reporting mechanisms, is resulting in onerous administrative burdens at the agency level and limiting the public discourse on accountability for public mandated and funded services²

For extensive and up-to-date reference see *National Settlement Conference II Proceedings: Community Building Strategies for the 21st Century Innovation, Inclusion and Partnership*, 2004, Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada. See also the background papers for this same conference *VSI National Working Groups Discussion Papers “Maximizing Settlement”*.

At the time of writing this report (Spring, 2005) the ISA sector was particularly concerned with two major issues of public accountability: the apparent diversion of settlement funds into general revenues in at least Quebec and British Columbia as a result of “settlement renewal” and the related devolution of previous federal responsibilities to the provincial level; and the impact of new contracting funding rules and procedures for HRSDC funded agencies across Canada and for the settlement sector in B.C.

- Increasing competition for limited settlement service dollars from a broader range of potential providers including public educational institutions and private sector providers
- The limited resources available for third sector advocacy work including research, policy development and community engagement

Community Autonomy and Advocacy

In Canada, the three-tier structure of federal, provincial, and municipal governments, and the recent decade of downloading of federal responsibilities to the provincial and municipal levels, is producing major challenges for advocacy by community-based providers of settlement and other vital social services. The existing nongovernmental voices on issues of immigration and settlement have multiple points of access to different levels and departments of government dealing with settlement (in all its stages), but often lack the necessary resources to properly address these issues.

The impact of advocacy efforts is contingent on a complex set of evolving relations with government agencies, involving both collaboration and conflict. An ongoing tension is that immigrant serving agencies desire to engage in effective social advocacy, with the government as their primary target, yet they depend heavily on government funding.

The question of representation is crucial for newcomer communities. Newcomers to Canada and their descendants should ultimately be able to partake not only of formal political citizenship, but also of social citizenship, the establishment of social ties that engender participation in a society. Social citizenship emphasizes social relations as well as political identity, embracing full participation in social, cultural, economic and political life as well as a commitment to human rights and social justice. It entails full membership in a society.

The “Advocacy Inventory” prepared as part of the background research for this feasibility study shows an extremely broad and diverse array of organizations dealing with settlement-related research, policy, media relations and public education. A large part of this activity in Canada is devoted to resolving the problem of recognition for internationally-acquired education, skills and experience. The range of organizations involved includes private sector leaders and business associations, private and community foundations and community charities (United Way and others), and immigrant professional associations along with various organized ethnoracial and anti-racist umbrella associations organized at the local, regional and pan-Canadian levels. For the community-based settlement sector, the range of potential partners in developing an advocacy agenda is very broad and the potential for fruitful partnerships is great.

Analysis of Surveys and Interviews

Survey Responses

We received a total of 58 surveys: 28 from British Columbia, 4 from Alberta, 2 from Manitoba, 18 from Ontario, and 6 from Atlantic Canada. Information from Quebec was gathered from interviews and background research; the survey questionnaire for this project was not distributed in Quebec.

Question One: Priorities for a Possible New Association

The survey responses for question one revealed clear trends. The two top choices of priorities (other than funding, which was stated as a given priority) were as follows:

- 37 respondents (or 64%) chose “Research and policy work to develop better models of settlement including language instruction and labour market integration” as one of their two choices. Of these, 17 were from B.C.; 4 were from Alberta; 11 were from Ontario; and 5 were from Atlantic Canada.
- 31 respondents (or 53%) chose “Professional standards and employment rights for settlement workers”. Of these, 20 were from B.C.; 3 were from Alberta; 1 was from Manitoba; 4 were from Ontario; and 3 were from Atlantic Canada.

The next choice of priorities was in the middle ground:

- 21 respondents (or 36%) chose “Policy and advocacy work on the recognition of internationally-acquired education, skills and experience” as one of their two top choices. Of these, 11 were from B.C.; 7 were from Ontario; and 3 were from Atlantic Canada.

The least commonly chosen priorities were the following:

- “Public education on newcomer rights” was selected by 9 respondents (or 16%).
- “Protection and improvement of the working conditions of currently employed newcomers” was selected by 4 respondents (or 7%).

There were also 9 respondents who chose a write-in response of “Other”. These responses are analyzed further along in this report.

Question 2: Form of a Possible New Association

Question 2 asked what form a new organization could take that most closely conformed to the respondent’s beliefs:

- 25 respondents (or 43%) chose the option “The new association would start as a merger of existing community-based umbrella organizations from the different regions of Canada. Other forms of membership and partnership would be considered by this body”.

- 12 of the respondents (or 21%) chose the option: “The new association would start as a merger of different non-government groups involved in settlement in Canada such as immigrant professional associations, school boards, colleges and universities, foundations and immigrant and refugee advocacy organizations along with community-based settlement service providers”.
- 11 respondents (or 19%) indicated that “No new organizational form is needed; the existing organizations involved in settlement should work together more effectively”.
- 2 respondents had “No Opinion”. Eight (8) respondents indicated “Other” opinions which often were a mix of the choices above.

Question 3: Relative Importance of Potential Partners

Question 3 asked who would be the most important (useful) types of partners if a new association came into being. The ranking chosen by the respondents revealed clear trends.

The top two choices, and closely aligned, were as follows:

- “Immigrant associations e.g. professional groupings, community organizations”; and
- “Government departments and bodies including municipal, provincial, and federal (including but not limited to CIC)”.

The middle choice was:

- “Other ethnic associations and ethnoracial umbrella organizations”.

The ranking was considerably lower for these three choices, which were also clustered together:

- “Research bodies and think tanks”;
- “Foundations (community and/or private); and
- “The private sector (business, corporations)”.

Interviews and Key Opinions

For this feasibility study, 37 people participated in expert interviews and focus groups (a few in both). These interviews have been used mainly to analyze the possible organizational options for a new pan-Canadian settlement “voice”. However it is also useful to note a number of key opinions that were reflected both in our interviews and in

the “write-in” comments provided by many survey respondents. For purposes of reference the respondents in this section have been identified by region and by whether or not they represent an ISA, in a manner consistent with the original survey methodology.

Need for a New Organization?

Several survey respondents simply emphasized their agreement with one of the options presented in the survey.

No new organization form is needed; the existing organizations involved in settlement should work together more effectively. [BC ISA]

No new organization form is needed; the existing organizations involved in settlement should work together more effectively. [Ontario non-ISA]

Other survey respondents expressed concerns that any new organizational initiative would divide the sector and reduce the resources available to existing umbrella organizations. The concerns about reducing resources were focused on the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), but also included the potential loss of resources to existing settlement umbrella organizations and agencies.

[We need to w]ork collaboratively with CCR as "sister agencies", taking each others' strengths and reputation. Not to divide the sector by creating the "thing". [BC ISA]

We do not see the need for a new association as posited [...] We see the broadly defined settlement sector as being active through the working groups of the Canadian Council for Refugees, and that a new association is not warranted. [Manitoba ISA]

Absolutely important not to invest precious resources in creating an additional superstructure. This would be redundant, a waste of resources and would eventually exist only to perpetuate itself. A coalition of umbrella organizations would make the best use of existing expertise, knowledge and networks, while at the same time enhancing the credibility of the immigrant and refugee serving sectors across Canada by working together more closely and presenting a common response to issues where necessary. [Ontario ISA]

There is no money to support the creation and ongoing work of a “new” body. I feel that the existing organizations are working to address the needs of the settlement community. [Ontario ISA]

Over the years, I have seen a lot of talk about a national settlement agency and it never goes anywhere because of two problems: creating such a group is a lot of work, and there needs to be some resolution of the role of the CCR such that the initiative is seen as strengthening not undermining it. If this is seen as just one

more attempt of CIC not to talk to advocates, then it will fail because the people with the energy and vision to make it happen will not invest. [Ontario ISA]

Some respondents simply expressed their views about the importance of building a new association dealing with settlement issues:

Establishment of a distinct body or voice is of ***HIGH*** priority. [BC ISA]

Others supported building a new association, but provided detailed opinions about the form and role of a new association with respect to existing settlement umbrella organizations.

This should be a consortium of government and non-government groups involved in settlement of newcomers in Canada [BC ISA]

A new association could be formed involving a broad range of NGO's, including existing settlement umbrella organizations, but it wouldn't be a "merger", rather it would be a constituted, organized and resourced venue for existing bodies to collaborate and carry out external communications at the national level. [BC ISA]

A broad definition of eligible potential members would be developed and then membership would be invited from the individual organizations, not from umbrella organizations [...] I am interested in a membership body, not a driving organization with which we somehow "merge". [Alberta ISA]

If the new association would "start as a merger of umbrella organizations with a commitment to develop a broader base of membership including serving organizations", I would approve [of] that. I am not in favour of having the umbrella organizations decide whether or not their member organizations can become members or not. Umbrella organizations in general, not just in immigrant services, are always controlled by the larger agencies, and sometimes don't speak very well for the whole membership. [Alberta ISA]

I think that the association needs to serve our needs as an emerging industry; this will help to ensure a clearer separation of mandate between the settlement association and CCR. CCR is a great thing and needs to continue, but its focus is on refugee protection and on advocacy. The new association should be less focused on advocacy (than CCR) and more focused on developing the standards, recognition and stature of this new field of professional involvement. Advocacy on behalf of client issues will be part of it, because our work is in human services; but the association should focus on building a strong sector and not only on service. [Alberta ISA]

Other respondents clearly saw any new settlement organization as promoting or representing a broad alliance of organizations and interests.

I think there is a need for a cross-Canada association that will provide a united voice for newcomers to Canada. This organization could work toward ensuring nationally equitable yet regionally sensitive services and build relationships across Canada. Key to the success of such an organization would be to involve all groups concerned and are working towards the successful settlement of newcomers to Canada including immigrant associations, support groups, networks, internationally trained professional associations and individual immigrants. [Ontario ISA]

A pan-Canadian organization is an interesting idea. It presents a good opportunity to harness some of the local/provincial experiences and successes and more actively share that across the country. An organization like this will only be useful if it is able to raise the professional bar of settlement workers, perhaps including more professional agreed upon standards. As well, it presents a better opportunity to work with national industry groups. However, while the move to a pan-Canadian approach is potentially useful, it should not discount or adversely affect the realities of the move to more municipal activity among individual agencies, groups of agencies and umbrella associations. We should not seek to mirror the inherent flaws of the Canadian immigration process itself – national decisions inconsistent with or not in concert with local realities and decision-making/funding power, etc. [Ontario ISA]

[The n]ew org needs a new mission focused on [...] research, policy and public education [...] and] antiracism [...] Need a new advocacy body because current umbrellas have become clubs unto themselves – closed - and need to open up to grow with the realities of integration and [three stages of] settlement. National representation to new organization should be based on load of immigrants – more reps for Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto. A balance of key individuals and agency reps i.e. direct members and interagency members like OCASI. Close relationship with CCR and national bodies with related interest. [Ontario ISA]

There are many organizations from British Columbia to the Maritimes that are working in isolation in order to enable newcomers to gain access to the Canadian system with regards to employment, civic participation, health care and many other basic needs in order to survive in Canada. Some of these organizations are considered ethno specific and others are mainstream service providers with programs that serve newcomer communities within their organizational structure. There needs to be an attempt to connect all organizations across Canada and engage them in a meaningful way to ensure that program models are shared and implemented. [Ontario non-ISA]

I would love to see a national organization advocating for the recognition of credentials and education acquired outside North America. I feel this is one of the most important elements (second to language) to immigration settlement issues. [Atlantic non-ISA]

Where is a national NGO that can look after settlement? Coordination, advocacy, research – that’s where you can add value to the sector.... [C]ommunication is important as some of these issues are already being addressed by existing organizations [examples of several pan-Canadian organizations...] We don’t want to step on toes, or recreate what already exists [...] Some organization/voice needs to take on a coordinating, advocacy and policy role for settlement issues in Canada – this is simply not being done [non-ISA pan-Canadian organization]

The Quebec Settlement Sector

Based on our interviews, colleagues in Quebec see two important potential benefits from more structured communication between settlement organizations in Quebec and those in the other regions of Canada. Many policy issues related to immigration and settlement are federal (funding, refugee issues, selection policy etc.), so a coordinated approach is important. As well the opportunities to exchange experience are important, as verified by the participation of Quebec delegates in Metropolis and pan-Canadian settlement conferences.

However a concern with settlement issues across Canada is simply outside of the day-to-day reality for most individuals in the community-based settlement sector in Quebec. Their experience is very different in many ways. Quebec has distinct policies in both immigration and settlement, and the Quebec government has a particular approach to settlement and to the community sector. Furthermore, the Quebec community organizations including the settlement sector have a strong collective history of bargaining over autonomy and fundamental principles that shapes their views and their priorities.

These differences are not always well understood or recognized in Canada outside of Quebec by government representatives, by other settlement providers, or by the broader community movement. Generally in pan-Canadian meetings, the Quebec delegates find much that is interesting but still feel somewhat like “outsiders”.

For all these reasons the best way to proceed with some kind of pan-Canadian association, from a Quebec perspective, might be a kind of “association of associations”. This reflects the way that settlement providers across the country are already organized, and would build on the existing strengths of the provincial umbrella organizations and potentially other partners like the CCR. At the same time this kind of arrangement would be sufficiently flexible to allow for the “asymmetric federalism” necessary to accommodate the different experiences in Quebec as well as the variety of types of provincial involvement in immigration and settlement across all of Canada. The existing provincial organizations could continue their work and at the same time new efforts could develop through consultation and working groups.

The main interest from Quebec in communication and coordination of settlement work with the rest of Canada would be in developing the professionalism of the sector to

provide better services as well as improving working conditions in the sector.

Policy Work, Advocacy and Research

Many of the respondents identified the need for improved policy work and independent advocacy in the settlement sector.

[Need to deal with broader policy issues in settlement such as racialization of poverty, community capacity and leadership building and equitable civic engagement. [Ontario ISA]

Despite the fact that Canada continues to accept large volumes of immigrants, it seems that the Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments are still disconnected in assessing and delivering programs that can respond to the needs of newcomers. There needs to be an effort on the government's part to understand this and create an intergovernmental policy / procedure that each government department must be educated on and implement in their programs and services. This policy / procedure framework should be informed by non-profit, ethno-racial, private and public organizations. It is time for government portfolios not to function in isolation but move beyond to service a changing and diverse population. [Ontario non-ISA]

As agencies if we want our voices heard, all we have to do is speak to those already working on our behalf. One of the major problems with what is currently happening is our fear of having our name attached to a particular issue which we disagree with [...] Until we as a group feel free to voice our discontent, without fear of reprisal, no body new or old will be able to do anything of benefit for the sector. [Ontario ISA]

Several respondents also commented on the importance of research and research alliances.

This has to be the "think tank" for settlement. It can not be controlled by the institutions like colleges and universities (although we need them involved) as they institutionalize everything and it ends up being about them and not the client. Same with the government. So we need the best of the settlement group in the country to run this in order to keep it client based. [BC, ISA]

It would seem that this organization should not have to do in-house research itself. Perhaps a partnership between immigrant-serving organizations, foundations and researchers could be created to get funds for targeted / applied research by graduate students in Canadian universities. [BC, non-ISA]

The Role of Settlement Workers

Several survey respondents emphasized the importance of a voice for settlement workers

within a broader association.

Front line workers need a voice at the table separate from management! [BC ISA]

Settlement workers need more recognition. [BC ISA]

Worker's voice is different from managers. Workers need to be involved, they know the reality of service delivery. [BC ISA]

There needs to be settlement workers at the table, maybe from each province. [BC ISA]

Many of our survey respondents and interviewees from across the country also indicated the importance of dealing with the working conditions and professional status of settlement workers. However a number of our interviewees emphasized the importance of settlement workers expressing their interests through an organization separate and autonomous from the settlement umbrella organizations.

Other Issues

Several respondents emphasized the importance of dealing with the **type** of funding provided to the community-based settlement sector, and not just the **amount** of funding. Several as well called for the application (monitoring, enforcement) of the Voluntary Sector Accord *Codes of Good Practice for Funding* and *Codes of Good Practice for Policy Dialogue* between **all** immigrant settlement funders and service deliverers in Canada (including provinces with devolution agreements).

A number of survey respondents and interviewees stressed the importance of greater sensitivity to the needs and voices of smaller settlement agencies, and organizations representing recently-arrived newcomer communities.

Summary of Surveys and Key Opinions

The priorities of the survey respondents (other than securing stable funding for settlement, which was stated as a given priority) are quite clear. The top choices were research and policy work for improved models of settlement, and professional standards and employment rights for settlement workers. Policy and advocacy work on the recognition of newcomers' internationally-acquired education, skills and experience was also chosen as a priority by many survey respondents.

Although public education on newcomer rights was not chosen as one of the top priorities by the survey respondents, many respondents as well as interviewees spoke about the importance of the work of the CCR. It is possible that the continuation of this work by the CCR and its supporters was taken as a "given", and that this impacted on the survey results. Similarly, the low priority given by survey respondents to the protection and improvement of the working conditions of currently employed newcomers may reflect a belief that this issue is best addressed by other organizations.

For the survey respondents the top choice of possible organizational forms is starting with a merger of existing community-based umbrella organizations from the different regions of Canada. The number of respondents choosing this option, however, is less than one-half (25 or 43%). A large number of these responses (15) come from B.C., which also had the highest number of total survey responses. These results are consistent with the focus group discussion (ISA) in B.C., in which the general consensus was for the urgency of creating a new pan-Canadian settlement association with representation of settlement workers.

Survey respondents also expressed clear preferences in terms of potential partners for a new association: immigrant associations and government, and ethnic associations and ethnoracial umbrella organizations.

Some of the results of our interviews have been highlighted above and others are explored later in this report with respect to options for moving forward. It is worth noting however that opinions on the formation of a new settlement “voice”, in Ontario in particular, are quite strong and rather mixed. There are many who fear that such an initiative would, for various reasons, weaken the community-based settlement sector. There are also many who see this as an opportunity to tackle new challenges, with new partners.

Some Starting Points

How then to move forward? Given the complexity of the issues, it may be useful to identify some basic “starting points” for discussion. The following elements are proposed (for discussion) as such starting points.

- * The historical division between “settlement services” and “employment issues for newcomers” must be addressed, and resolved, if we are serious about improved settlement outcomes.
- * The community-based settlement sector needs new partners and allies to increase its support and extend its influence.
- * To participate meaningfully in policy consultations and building new alliances the community-based sector needs separate and adequate resources for research, policy analysis and organizational stability.
- * Adequate and stable funding for settlement in all three stages must come from a variety of levels and departments of government other than CIC. For the community-based settlement sector, addressing this issue involves both collaboration and competition with a range of service providers dealing with newcomer needs including employment, education and health. Linked to this issue is the continuing question of restrictive criteria for settlement services (length of time in Canada, status etc.).

* Funding issues involve not only the amount of funding but also the type of funding. Appropriate and stable forms of funding are vital to community-based services including settlement services. This issue cannot be addressed simply in private negotiations with funders over particular service agreements; its resolution requires public advocacy addressing the current misunderstanding of “accountability” that prevail in many spheres of government.

* There will likely be a great deal of “asymmetry” in the forms of association that are developed. Factors that cannot be ignored include the distinct features of immigration and settlement in Quebec, the growing role of the provinces and municipalities in settlement, and the disproportionate weight of immigration in Canada’s major cities.

* Consultations on the issues addressed in this study, whether public or private, must involve newcomers and their various organizations including advocacy groups and professional associations. As well, any organizational initiatives must be designed to support the role of the CCR and build collaboration with this organization.

* The credibility and potential influence of any organization representing a pan-Canadian “voice” for settlement depends on active support, at a minimum, from the following:

- the settlement umbrella organizations in B.C., Ontario and Quebec
- at least one federal department other than CIC
- at least one provincial government
- at least one of the larger municipal governments
- several pan-Canadian or strong regional advocacy organizations dealing with settlement-related issues

Forms of Pan-Canadian Association

Several people we interviewed reminded us that the development of a pan-Canadian settlement association is not a new idea. It has been discussed by the umbrella organizations of community-based settlement providers at various times over the past fifteen years or so, but no agreement was achieved. Other types of association have also been proposed, including a pan-Canadian association based mainly on newcomers as individual spokespersons or through their representative associations.

Some of those we interviewed identified a kind of classification of possible types of pan-Canadian associations dealing with settlement and related issues of newcomer employment and rights. The following (very general) classification and commentary is presented for consideration and discussion.

1. A pan-Canadian association dealing principally with the rights of newcomers, especially refugees, within the immigration system.

Comment: the majority opinion (not consensus) of those we surveyed and interviewed would be that the CCR is playing this role and should be supported in this role, but is not an adequate vehicle for coordination of settlement issues.

2. A pan-Canadian association based mainly on newcomers as individual spokespersons or through their representative associations.

Comment: the creation of such a body could not come directly from the community-based settlement sector, but any movement towards such a goal should receive serious consideration for support.

3. A pan-Canadian body dealing with issues of equity and anti-racism.

Comment: as indicated by our “Advocacy Inventory”, there are already multiple existing organizations dealing with these issues at the pan-Canadian and regional levels. Any productive initiatives towards further pan-Canadian collaboration in this area could only come from the existing organizations. However, these organizations should be considered as ranking high among potential allies for any new initiatives.

4. A pan-Canadian grouping (or association of provincial bodies) of settlement workers addressing working conditions and professionalization – membership being frontline workers.

Comment: as indicated by a number of those we interviewed, such an organization needs to be independent from the umbrella organizations of the community-based settlement providers. Collaboration however is a priority, particularly given the importance attached by our survey respondents and interviewees to the issues of settlement workers’ conditions.

5. A pan-Canadian national “industry” association of settlement service providers.

Comment: this is the only kind of pan-Canadian association that could be developed out of the direct efforts of the umbrella organizations representing community-based settlement providers. However, as noted by many of those interviewed for this project, the credibility of such an organization will depend on its ability to speak and act for better settlement outcomes as well as the “survival” or “self-interest” concerns of its membership base. The original “Framework” document that gave rise to this study posed the question: *Would the purpose of a potential new body focus on policy dialogue or include both policy dialogue and program/operational areas of concern?* The results of this feasibility study suggest that a settlement “industry” association cannot succeed unless it does both.

6. An “association of associations” which builds communications and coordination between the multiple existing organizations dealing with settlement issues and newcomer rights.

Comment: many of our respondents favoured this option. This option, by its nature, cannot be implemented by any one organization or grouping. However, it may be a legitimate goal. If so, such a goal would be largely determinant in shaping priorities, particularly with respect to securing and sharing resources through alliances.

Questions of Mandate and Representation

As suggested by many of our interviewees to date, the question of **mandate** is key. Without clarification of the mandate for any new association or “voice”, it is not possible to identify properly its priorities and structures.

Another formulation of mandate suggested by our discussions is as follows: ***to improve the capacity of existing community-based settlement organizations to contribute to improved settlement outcomes for Canada’s newcomers***. This tentative formulation is put forward for consideration because it seems to capture a number of vital points:

- Identifying the goals of association clearly with improved settlement outcomes;
- Recognizing the potential contributions and current limits of the community-based settlement sector; and
- Opening doors towards new alliances and forms of associations

The question of representation is also vital with respect to legitimacy, credibility and functioning. Resolution of this issue however depends on clarity as to goals, mandate and proposed organizational form. At this point we can do little more than identify some key principles with respect to representation:

- The credibility of further initiatives by the current ad-hoc planning committee requires transparency. The group must clarify, at a minimum, its goals, proposed mandate, and methods of decision-making.
- Any further initiatives would maintain and respect the autonomy of the existing settlement umbrella organizations. There is no evidence at this point for the benefits of an organizational merger.
- Broader partnerships (if desired) can be initiated on the basis of collaboration and resource sharing, without the preliminary negotiation of formal rules of membership.
- Eventually however any initiatives towards broader alliances necessitate the development of new forms of membership; the consolidation of partnerships requires an equitable and formal basis for representation in decision-making

Summary Analysis of Options

Certain elements of further action appear to be clear.

1. As per the original plan, the results of this feasibility study must be discussed widely with the constituencies of the various community-based settlement umbrella

organizations and any other interested parties.

2. Whatever future options are selected, they should be discussed in private by formally-appointed delegates with the leadership of the CCR. The goal of these discussions should be the establishment of the maximum possible formal agreement on current and future working relationships, including approaches to securing funding resources.
3. Business meetings addressing operational and coordination issues should continue between CIC and the representatives of the umbrella organizations for the community-based settlement service providers, and the expenses for such meetings should continue to be funded by CIC. The continuation of such meetings however should not be confused with a decision to use this forum as a “launching pad” for a new pan-Canadian settlement association. This option needs to be assessed on its own merits.

Beyond this, there appear to be three main possible courses of action for the sponsors of this feasibility study. These options are presented below, along with an identification of potential “rewards” and “risks” associated with each option.

1. To use the existing network of umbrella organizations of community-based settlement providers to launch a new organization that will become the “voice” of settlement in Canada.

Rewards: This is the simplest, most pragmatic option. It builds on an existing although somewhat informal infrastructure. A minimal amount of funding could likely be secured from CIC. Settlement sector spokespersons represented through their umbrella organizations could begin immediately to use this forum for negotiation around pressing concerns.

Risks: Funding from CIC would likely be minimal and inadequate for the vision of the organization. Further, the establishment of an immediate funding relationship with CIC would almost inevitably negate the possibility of funding from other federal departments, and compromise the possibility of securing funding from other sources both governmental and other. Passive or active resistance to this initiative from the broader settlement sector would be very strong.

2. To work towards something larger, taking steps to be more inclusive.

Rewards: This option appears to have the greatest possibility of building broad support from potential allies, including funders other than CIC. As such it seems to best meet the broader goals of this feasibility study. Collaboration with other partners broadens the potential funding pool for both settlement services and settlement-related advocacy.

Risks: Considerable initial investment of energies would be required, without an immediate guarantee of sufficient resources. Open negotiations with potential

partners may also increase the risks of competition for limited funding resources.

3. To postpone any organizational initiatives, and concentrate on more effective use of existing organizations.

Rewards: This option will produce the minimum of overt and covert opposition from the various groups and individuals opposed to any new organizational initiative towards a pan-Canadian settlement “voice” for a variety of reasons outlined in this report. It also requires the minimum of extra effort from the settlement sector representatives who have invested in this feasibility study, allowing them to concentrate on the maintenance of their own stressed organizations.

Risks: The potential contributions of the community-based settlement services sector will continue to be minimized or ignored. Potential sources of new funding are not explored, and potential alliances can not be negotiated.

Overall it seems prudent, perhaps essential, to proceed cautiously. The question of mandate takes precedence for discussion, debate, and clarification. It is essential to build on the strengths of other partners, both old and new, including the CCR. Ways must be found to not only involve these partners in discussion, but also to develop meaningful collaboration in specific areas of common interest.

The perspective that appears most attractive is the development of an “association of associations” – sponsoring forums and facilitating working groups with the goal of developing multiple partnerships and initiatives to improve settlement outcomes for Canada’s newcomers. This perspective appears to be the one that would meet certain essential requirements including support from the settlement umbrella organizations in Ontario and Quebec as well as B.C., support and active collaboration from the CCR, and the potential for active funding support from a variety of partners for a variety of activities. It also appears the most attractive from the perspective of securing additional resources.

Resources and Related Action Plans

What resources would be needed for an effective and autonomous “voice” for better settlement outcomes in Canada? At an absolute minimum – in an ideal world – such an organization would need something like the following: an Executive Director or Coordinator, a Research Coordinator, a Policy Analyst, a Communications Coordinator, and one senior and one junior administrative staff positions. In addition to the cost of staffing these positions, the organization would require funds for communications and website maintenance, pan-Canadian travel, and the hosting of conferences. A minimum annual budget would therefore be in the range of \$600,000 to \$800,000.

Once we pose the issue in these terms however it is clear that:

- No single funder is likely at this time to provide this amount of resources; and

- If any single funder did provide this level of resources, the organization would be completely dependent on this one funder; and further
- The provision of this level of funding to a new organization by one single funder could create significant hostility from other organizations with partially overlapping mandates.

Furthermore, the question of **funding** cannot be separated from the issues of **autonomy** and **independent advocacy**. This issue was emphasized by a number of persons that we interviewed for this project. The development of funding support from multiple organizations appears in their view to be quite practical, to the degree that this support is dedicated to joint initiative such as conferences, research projects, and working groups on issues of common concern. Further, it seems reasonable to imagine the existing settlement umbrella organizations investing staff time in such initiatives, and being paid back with funding support for their contributions to joint initiatives.

Within this perspective therefore the action plans that could be associated with the various practical options, in addition to the minimum steps previously outlined, are as follows.

1. To use the existing network of umbrella organizations of community-based settlement providers to launch a new organization that will become the “voice” of settlement in Canada.
 - Secure basic funding for continued operations from CIC
 - Appoint delegated representatives to negotiate additional funding from potential supporters, either ongoing or project-specific
 - Appoint other delegated representatives to inform potential supporters of the decision of this group to constitute themselves as the “voice” of settlement in Canada
 - Convene a non-decisional, pan-Canadian assembly to publicize and promote these achievements with no formal criteria for representation or input into decision making
 - Establish both internal and broader working groups on key policy and operational issues, making maximum use of available funding resources and active alliances
2. To work towards something larger, taking steps to be more inclusive.
 - Create a working group with formal delegation and mandate to deal with operational issues and general policy discussion with CIC
 - Create a separate working group with non-majority overlap to simultaneously acquire resources from funders other than CIC and explore possibilities of practical collaboration with various potential partners, likely through the establishment on distinct, priority issue, pan-Canadian working groups
 - Convene a broad but non-decisional pan-Canadian assembly with potential partners in due time (e.g. 2006) to further explore options
 - Based on consolidated relationships with established partner organizations, convene at a reasonable time (e.g. late 2007 or early 2008) an invitational, representative, decision-making assembly to formally create a broader association

of associations or new organization

3. To postpone any organizational initiatives, and concentrate on more effective use of existing organizations.

- Inform all concerned of the decision to not pursue this initiative at this time, and the reasons for this decision
- Clarify the limits and scope of ongoing communications with CIC and establish an appropriate division of individual responsibilities and schedule of activities to reflect this agreement
- Concentrate the energies of current sector leaders on strengthening their umbrella organizations and building local partnerships
- Take advantage of opportunities for relevant policy or research initiatives where resources are available to sustain involvement

Conclusion

This study shows broad support for developing a new orientation for settlement in Canada, and suggests there are many potential allies for the community-based settlement services sector in developing this new orientation. The survey, interview and focus group respondents have contributed some clear sense of priorities with respect to both policy issues and possible partners. The results of the feasibility study also reveal a wide diversity of opinions and indeed some strong divisions with respect to the possible forms of organization or association required to further these goals. Further development of this project now depends on the decisions of its sponsors.

Appendix: Survey and Interview questions

The following questions (with an appropriate introduction) were used as the survey questionnaire for this project, and also constituted the guide for expert interviews.

1. The new association, if it comes into being, will have limited resources to deal with a wide number of issues related to improving settlement for Canada's newcomers. Securing stable and adequate funding for settlement from a variety of sources would be one priority.

If you were advising the leadership of this new association, what would you choose as the two most important other priorities (i.e. other than funding) for the first two years? Please indicate your two choices only with an "X". If one of your two choices is not listed here, indicate one choice from the list with an "X" and write in the other choice.

- ☐ Public education on newcomer rights
- ☐ Research and policy work to develop better models of settlement including language instruction and labour market integration
- ☐ Professional standards and employment rights for settlement workers
- ☐ Policy and advocacy work on the recognition of internationally-acquired education, skills and experience
- ☐ Protection and improvement of the working conditions of currently-employed newcomers
- ☐ OR OTHER (write in) _____

2. There are many different forms that such a new organization could take at the beginning. Below are some of the main options that are being considered. Please indicate with an "X" the choice below that corresponds most closely with your beliefs.

- ☐ The new association would start as a merger of existing community-based immigrant settlement umbrella organizations from the different regions of Canada. Other forms of membership and partnership would be considered by this body.
- ☐ The new association would start as a merger of different non-government groups involved in settlement in Canada such as immigrant professional associations, school boards, colleges and universities, foundations and immigrant and refugee advocacy organizations along with community-based settlement service providers.
- ☐ No new organizational form is needed; the existing organizations involved in

- _____ settlement should work together more effectively.
- _____ No opinion
- _____ OTHER: EXPLAIN _____

3. Potential partners

If this new form of association comes into being, it will need support. Which do you think would be the most important (useful) types of partners?

Please rank the following types of potential partners in terms of importance, with 1 being the most important and 6 the least important. If you do not see this type of potential partner as of any importance, you may write N/A.

- _____ Other ethnic associations and ethnoracial umbrella organizations
- _____ Immigrant associations e.g. professional groupings, community organizations
- _____ Government departments and bodies including municipal, provincial, and federal (including but not limited to CIC)
- _____ Research bodies and think tanks
- _____ Private sector (business, corporations)
- _____ Foundations (community and/or private)

4. Other comments: please add any other comments you wish to make about this survey or this project.

The research for this report was done by *Policy Solutions Consulting*

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The documents accompanying this Project Report include:

The *Advocacy Inventory* of organizations involved in settlement-related policy, research, and public education, Sean Richmond (11 files and/or documents)

A Pan-Canadian Settlement Voice: Constraints and Opportunities, Sarah Wayland

The National Newcomer Settlement Backlog, Mwarigha M.S.

Third Sector Restructuring and the New Contracting Regime: The Case of Immigrant Serving Organizations in Ontario, Ted Richmond and John Shields, CERIS Policy Matters Number Three [ceris.metropolis.net/PolicyMatter/PolicyMatters3.pdf]