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Exploring Innovative Migrant Integration Practices in Small and Mid-Sized Cities across Canada

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Abstract

Small and mid-sized cities across Canada are experiencing demographic challenges due to low birth rates, an ageing population, rural de-population, youth out-migration, and difficulties attracting and retaining immigrants (Akbari 2009; Dobrowolsky 2013). As a result of population decline, small and mid-sized cities are experiencing labour shortages and a shrinking tax-base posing challenges to economic growth. Small and mid-sized cities are relying on the attraction and retention of immigrants to spur population growth and economic development. Federal and Provincial immigration programming responds to this immigration imperative, however, efforts to disperse immigrants across small and mid-sized cities have been met with challenges. Intentional programming to shift immigrants away from large urban centres and across small and mid-sized cities can be referred to as the regionalization of immigration (Valade 2017). Immigration and settlement research suggests that the success of regionalization efforts is contingent on a city's readiness to support a growing diverse community (Tamang 2010). A city's readiness to support newcomers can be attributed to a plurality of city actors engaged in immigration and settlement efforts. A city's ability to support a growing population is enhanced by a robust settlement sector that coordinates a range of social and cultural services including, housing, employment, and language support. A paradox is emergent in Canada's immigration and settlement regime, however, as resources to support immigrant integration tend to be allocated to cities where large populations of immigrants settle. This paper is then guided by the question, how can small and mid-sized cities "get ready" to attract and retain newcomers?

This paper offers a critical review of Canada's immigration programming and suggests innovative ideas as to how to address the challenges of attracting and retaining immigrants in small and mid-sized cities across Canada. This paper will take up debates on the neoliberalization of immigration and address the current state of immigration programming, specifically regarding Canada's Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) and Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs). Additionally, this paper will explore city theories that address the potential for immigration in less diverse cities. At the center of analysis are case studies to illustrate how cities can do without a vast settlement sector and prepare for immigration through strong municipal leadership, a coordinated approach to immigration planning, and a focus on economic actors and public institutions.[1]

Keywords: Immigrant attraction and retention, Regionalization, Small and mid-sized cities, Canada

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Introduction

The Canadian government continues to increase immigration numbers as a strategy to offset Canada's declining population and by doing so seeks to ensure the economic stability and growth of the nation. On October 31, 2018, the government released a three-year Immigration Plan, 2019-2021, establishing the goal to welcome more than a million permanent residents to Canada. Of these newcomers, the majority will be economic migrants, coming through various provincial and federal programs such as the Federal Skilled Worker Class and the Provincial Nominee Program (IRCC, 2018). Illustrating the vital role of immigration for the growth of our nation, with emphasis on economic gain and global competitiveness, Canada's Minister of Immigration, Ahmed Hussen, states:

> The new multi-year immigration levels plan supports Canadian employers and businesses by ensuring they have the skilled labour they need to spur innovation and help to keep our country at the forefront of the global economy. Building on the strong foundation set out last year and continuing to increase economic immigration will help Canada stay competitive and attract talent from around the world. (October 31, 2018)

While we know the main population driver has and will continue to be immigration, Canada faces a dilemma in ensuring the even dispersal of newcomers across the nation (Cater et al., 2008; Flynn & Bauder, 2015; Valade, 2017). In 2018 "immigrants accounted for 71 percent of the country's annual population growth (Fang et al., 2019, p. 25). In small and rural towns across Canada, however, the immigrant population is relatively small, often comprising "less than ten percent of the resident population" (Edmonston, 2019, p. 9). In line with this observation on population distribution, Haan (2019) notes that "newcomers to Canada tend to settle in the same locations as internal migrants, so rather than ameliorate a population distribution challenge, many immigrants have instead exacerbated infrastructure mismatch" (p. 13).

The Canadian government has shown interest in ensuring the even dispersal of immigrants who settle outside major Canadian cities: to achieve a more equitable distribution of the social and economic benefits that it's widely acknowledged immigrants bring to local communities, to tackle population decline and boost regional economic development in rural areas, and to reduce pressure on Canada's largest cities. Active efforts to disperse immigrants across Canadian provinces and territories can be referred to as the regionalization of immigration (Valade, 2017). Dating back to 2001, the Canadian government released the report titled "Towards a More Balanced Geographic Distribution of Immigrants" discussing what federal and provincial jurisdictions could do to promote the dispersal of immigrants away from Canada's major cities toward rural and regional communities across Canada. While there have been increased efforts to promote the regional distribution of immigrants and more immigrants are settling in the Prairies and the Atlantic provinces, the 2016 census reveals that the majority of recent immigrants are still choosing residence in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Small and regional communities across Canada are increasingly adopting the view that immigration is one critical avenue to support their economic and social development. In May 2019 the Conference Board of Canada (CBOC) published a report titled "Can't Go It Alone. Immigration is Key to Canada's Growth Strategy" demonstrating how immigration is conducive to Canada's economic growth. The CBOC reports "Canada's retirement rate has gone up, and by 2030 all 9.2 million of Canada's most prominent worker cohort-- the baby boomers-- will be of retirement age." Additionally, findings reveal "Between 2018 and 2040, 11.8 million people will leave Canadian schools and become workers, far short of the 13.4

million workers exiting the labour force" (CBOC, 2019, p. 3). Immigration is a critical strategy for Canada to reach its full economic potential. The research suggests that the prosperity and social and economic health of small and regional Canada rely on the attraction and retention of immigrants (Carter et al., 2008; Jamal, 2017). Where newcomers and immigrants successfully settle and integrate into small and regional communities across Canada, both newcomers and the receiving community benefit from economic and social gains.

Retention efforts are traditionally located in large urban centres in the form of a settlement sector that assists newcomers with housing, language, and employment supports. The settlement sector in Canada is robust, however, resources tend to support large cities with integration support to serve the many immigrants that currently settle there. Without the same infrastructure of support, attraction and retention efforts in small and mid-sized cities have been met with challenges. The Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) for instance, assists in the attraction of newcomers, however, it is observed that for the program to be truly successful local actors have to be better engaged (Dobrowolsky, 2013). Migration scholars understand the nuance and complexity of successful attraction and retention strategies, where cities need to be welcoming and inclusive for efforts to be successful (Tamang, 2010). Inclusion efforts are a critical display of a city's readiness to support a growing diverse population. This paper explores the role of local actors in small and mid-sized cities in planning for immigration and supporting attraction and retention efforts.

Moreover, as a consequence of the current Covid-19 pandemic, immigration across the globe is uncertain and precarious. The pandemic has created significant challenges for Canada. The impact of Covid-19 on immigration matters in Canada is two-fold, on the one hand, immigration targets are being unmet hindering economic development and the ability to fill labour shortages. On the other hand, Covid-19 is disproportionately impacting immigrant communities as they are at a higher risk of contracting the virus (Guttmann et al., 2020, p. viii) and are hardest hit by pandemic-related job losses (Statistics Canada, 2020). A recent report from the Royal Bank of Canada observes how the pandemic is negatively impacting Canada's immigration trajectory putting Canada's economic and labour force growth at risk. The bank anticipates "only 70% of the originally targeted 341,000 new permanent residents at the end of the year, a decline of about 100,000 people" (as reported by the Canadian Press, 2020). The RBC report continues to elaborate on where the labour shortages are, pointing to the health and eldercare sector. In this particular sector, the Canadian Press (2020) cites how jobs are not valued and wages are low making it difficult to retain both Canadian-born and migrant workers. With the long-term goal to attract and retain immigrants, the imperative for Canada to create routes to meaningful and well-paid occupations is clear. Moreover, a study conducted by the World Education Services (WES) surveying 4,615 prospective immigrants to Canada, reports that 35% of respondents are considering delaying their immigration to Canada due to Covid-19 related issues including travel restrictions, contracting the virus during travel, and a potential recession with fewer jobs in their sector (WES, 2020, p. 3). However, in the same study conducted by WES, finds that despite Covid-19 majority (57% of respondents) are still interested in migrating to Canada (2020, p. 3). As the country relies on the entrance of many immigrants annually to fuel the economy and fill labour shortages, the imperative to attract and retain immigrants in small and mid-sized cities is all the more topical, with challenges exacerbated during the pandemic.

This paper asks, *how can small and mid-sized cities across Canada plan for immigration? Without an established settlement sector in their region, how can cities create the conditions for inclusion to benefit all residents and newcomers?* This paper will examine the theoretical, practical, and innovative approaches to fostering inclusion in small and mid-sized cities. This paper explores topics of leadership, civic engagement, and the role of

public institutions to address innovativeness in community preparation. Small and mid-sized cities do not need a vast settlement sector. Starting with small acts like the adoption of employment equity and anti-racism policies in public institutions and local businesses, policies that are sure to benefit all residents.

Harnessing Local Leadership

Research suggests that strong municipal leadership at the local level and a social justice orientation can drive inclusion forward and shape the many facets of everyday life in a city. Local leadership is critical in shaping policies and creating an inclusive environment at the local level that can either include newcomers or create a divide (Jamal, 2017). Municipal actors are increasingly involved in the settlement of new residents in their region. City leadership is essential in helping the wider community to support the idea that a vibrant economic, social, and cultural base can generate the quality of life that immigrant populations seek, and all residents enjoy. Whatever their size or history, successful cities are led by innovative, forward-looking local governments that know how to use the authority and instruments of public office to serve the best interests of all, including new immigrants. Successful innovation at the municipal level has the potential to redirect the public discourse about the benefits of migration and facilitate the development of more successful mobility systems.

Small and mid-sized cities across Canada in the face of demographic and economic challenges offer spaces for innovation and experimentation. In addressing the ideal conditions for immigrant attraction and retention in small city Canada, scholars point to the role of the municipality in shaping a welcoming community and ensuring the necessary infrastructure required for immigrant integration (Jamal, 2017; Bradford & Baldwin, 2018; Zwick et al., 2018). Katz and Nowak (2018) have coined new civic leadership in cities as "new localism". New localism refers to the ability of urban communities, of any size, to address modern-day problems such as "global economic competition, poverty, the challenges of social diversity, and the imperatives of environmental sustainability" (as cited by Bradford & Baldwin, 2018, p. 2-3). The ability for municipalities to solve such problems is dependent on "the mobilization of local knowledge and community-based networks" (Bradford & Baldwin, 2018, p. 3). New localism speaks to the strategies of regionalization of immigrants as the potential for municipalities to play a formative role in their community relies on the changes in "problem-solving from the nation-state to the locality" (Bradford & Baldwin, 2018, p. 3). Neoliberal ideologies that facilitate the privatization of services allow cities to "emerge as strategic spaces in a global age where the most imaginative and influential problem-solvers congregate and learn from one another" (Katz and Nowak as cited by Bradford & Baldwin, 2018, p. 3). New localism requires complete cohesion with government and community partners, civic entrepreneurs, and institutional intermediaries, thus "the teachings of new civic leadership" are resolutely place-based and can adapt well to mid-sized cities (Bradford & Baldwin, 2018, p. 3-4). New localism describes how leadership can emerge from public, private, and voluntary sectors. With a coordinated approach, civic leaders from different sectors can use their local knowledge to drive change.

New local governance of immigration in Canada has been established through the development of Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs), as they play a critical role in the settlement and integration of immigrants in small city Canada (Pero, 2017). In 2018, documented, were thirty-five LIPs in Ontario, seven in the Atlantic region, fourteen in the Prairie provinces, and eighteen in British Columbia and one in the territories (Pathways to Prosperity, 2018). The LIPs are a partnership-based program to "support newcomers to become fully engaged in the economic, social, political and cultural life of Canada" (CIC, 2013, p. 4). The LIPs do not deliver settlement services in their region but work to coordinate

services and build on community partnerships for a better welcome (Pero, 2017, p. 77). Common priority areas across the LIPs include employment, housing, health and wellbeing, language skills and education, community safety, and relationship with police and justice system, civic engagement and political participation, social support, community inclusion, and engagement, and public transit (Chuong & Rashid, 2015, p. 5). Pero (2017) outlines how an indicator of success for a LIP comes in the form of municipal leadership where the city is a signatory of the LIP plan and plays an active role in the planning process (p. 81). The LIPs exemplify how Canada's settlement sector is designed to support the integration of newcomers, as such LIPs tend to be established in regions where there is a high-density of settled immigrants.

This paper argues that even without a LIP in place, municipal leadership can assist in the convening of local stakeholders around immigration matters and their plans for community growth. Municipal leadership can activate a community's readiness to support a diverse community. One way in which leaders can do this is through the media, shaping public discourse about the benefits of immigration and promoting ethnocultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. Another tactic is through a strategic planning process. With or without a LIP, leaders can convene stakeholders to address immigration matters in their community. Moreover, leaders can enact inclusive policies, such as "multilingual interpretation and translation policies, employment equity policies and anti-racism policies" (Tamang, 2010, p. 61). The following text box outlines an example of an innovative migrant integration practice, readily adaptable to small and mid-sized cities. Consider the good practices below to learn how municipal leadership can shape public discourse, prioritize immigration in community planning, and act as an inclusive employer.

Good Practice #1

Shaping Public Discourse

There are various ways in which cities can create conditions for immigrant attraction and retention. Making the case for increased immigration to support economic development in small and regional communities has been central to public education on demographic issues in these regions. For example, to foster dialogue regarding immigration, the economy, and local communities, the New Brunswick Multicultural Council (NBMC) initiated what is called "New Conversations" to convene stakeholders to address the challenges associated with the province's plan for growth. The New Conversations convened in fifteen towns and cities across New Brunswick, gathering with over one hundred partner organizations. The forum relied on hard data and evidence as well as personal stories to best illustrate the challenges to each community and the province writ large. The public forums involved local employers such as representatives from the forestry industry, local restaurants, and nursing homes, to speak to the issues of labour shortages. Employers used the platform to explain to the community why turning to immigration is a viable solution. Immigrants also told their stories to help educate the community about the complexity and depth of their experiences, highlighting both the positive and negative realities of settling in a new community. A positive experience could be securing a job, while a negative reality is the experience of racism.

Research tells us demographic changes have a large and lasting impact on local economies and public services (Bollman, 2018). To elucidate this point, the New Conversations public forum, invited leading economists and community leaders to present local demographic and labour challenges in an either/or scenario, where communities

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would have to face "challenges to growth? or challenges of decline?" In the scenario for growth, the community may have to, for example, learn how to educate culturally diverse schools, or recognize foreign credentials to fill labour market gaps. In the scenario for a decline, communities may have to choose what schools to close down, or where to increase taxes to make up for a reduced tax base based on population size. The New Conversations ultimately sought to frame the challenges for the community without being prescriptive, resulting in a holistic community conversation that prompted communities to identify solutions for themselves.

The president of the NBMC, Mike Timani, states in the post-tour report:

> Populist movements are emerging around the world and throughout Canada, promoting misinformation, myths, and-- in the worst cases-- xenophobia and racism. We must continue investing in education that makes the case for why immigration is so important to our collective wellbeing and future prosperity. We must also prepare our communities, workplaces, and institutions to welcome more newcomers from diverse backgrounds in order to enrich our communities, grow our economy, and share our passion for this province. (October 2018)

Small and mid-sized cities across Canada understand how an increase in immigration to their regions can address demographic challenges and support economic growth. The New Conversations initiative demonstrates how educating the public on immigration matters is a critical first step in creating an inclusive environment to attract and retain newcomers.

Good Practice #2

Planning for Immigration

Whether a city has a LIP or not, community leaders can convene to develop a strategy for immigration. The link between economic development and immigration is critical for small- and mid-sized cities who rely on immigration to increase their labour-power and up shore the economic growth of their communities. Local immigration strategies are being created across communities in Canada to strengthen immigrant attraction and retention efforts and support labour market outcomes. In Moncton for example, immigration is understood to be a pillar of their economic development strategy. The Great Moncton Immigration Strategy (2014-2018) states "Population growth is not an end in and of itself. Neither is economic growth...urban centres continue to drive economic and population growth, not for some abstract bragging rights but because this is needed to shore up the fiscal capacity of government to provide public services and infrastructure" (p. 1). Thus, the immigration imperative for Canada rests not only on securing a diversity of skilled labour for a growing workforce but ensuring there is a large enough tax-base to keep up with our high living standards. Immigration strategies are a critical first step in addressing immigrant attraction and retention.

Good Practice #3

Inclusive Policymaking at the Municipal Level

Cities have varying degrees of authority and may be less influential than their national counterparts in the policymaking arena. City leaders can, however, intervene and create the conditions for inclusion in meaningful ways in their role as employers. Municipalities leading the way are using purchasing power and supplier diversity to drive inclusive growth and urban prosperity. Every year, the city of Toronto spends about CAD 1.8 billion (USD 1.35 billion) on goods and services, from large construction projects to one-off catering contracts. Starting in 2017, the city wants to harness that procurement power to help lift minorities, aboriginal people, recent immigrants and people with disabilities out of poverty. The Toronto Social Procurement Policy aims to help businesses owned by members of disadvantaged groups participate in the bidding process for public contracts. Vendors working on city contracts are encouraged to participate in workforce development programs with vulnerable groups, such as youth.

Engaging Economic Actors

As the provision of immigration strategies continue to be driven by economic motives and the regionalization of immigration, scholars caution that the downloading of settlement provision to local actors can result in unintended consequences. Migration scholars reveal how immigration policies to support regionalization efforts are driven by neoliberal logic characterized by economic principles and trends of "decentralization (from the federal government to the provinces) and devolution (from the public to the private sector)" (Dobrowolsky, 2013, p. 199). The neoliberalization of immigration efforts has meant that provinces can tailor immigration programs to their specific needs, however, successful implementation relies on the synchronicity of provincial and local efforts. The challenges in coordination between provincial immigration programming and local governments have led to uneven resource allocation and uneven development of cities across Canada (Tamang, 2010).

The regionalization of immigration has assisted local actors in developing a settlement sector in their region, this process has also led to the neoliberalization of settlement service provision (Flynn & Bauder, 2015). Neoliberalism "describes a set of practices and 'ideological beliefs' that have become prominent since the 1970s", in practice neoliberalism focuses on "liberating individuals from the fetters of the state and emphasizing the importance of the market" (Cragg, 2011, p. 65). In the context of settlement service provision, the adoption of neoliberal principles has meant increased privatization where local actors have a larger stake in attracting and retaining new residents in their region.

The Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) is one example of the neoliberalization of settlement service provision. The PNP allows provinces and territories the opportunity to "select applicants according to their own criteria and nominate them for immigration into their territories" (Baglay, 2012, p. 121). Provinces and territories alike can develop their requirements, however, all PNP's "have at least two streams: (skilled) worker and business stream" (Baglay, 2012, p. 126). Since the PNP's establishment in 1998, provinces and territories have demonstrated that each region is unique to diverse objectives and strategies, as exemplified in their selection criteria (Baglay, 2012, p. 127). The PNP was initiated in Manitoba in 1998 and has been in place for twenty years now, it is often cited for its success "not only for its retention rates, at 80 percent during the 2000s, but also because of its higher

dispersal of settlers among smaller towns and rural areas" (Carter et al., 2008 as cited by Valade, 2017, p. 42). Manitoba's success in adapting the PNP to fill labour shortages and spark population growth has been attributed to a strong "partnership between the provincial government and the municipalities" (Valade, 2017, p. 42). Building on successes and continuing the trend of state-led immigrant provision to more locally-led immigrant provision, programs such as the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot, the Atlantic Immigration Pilot, and the Municipal Nominee Program is being established in support of regionalization efforts and responds to the serious labour shortages across small and mid-sized cities in Canada.

Challenges identified with the success of the PNP relate to the criteria used amongst provinces and territories across Canada, where both federal and provincial immigration strategies largely focus on attracting the same immigration class, the skilled worker (Baglay, 2012, p. 137). Dobrowolsky (2011) cautions that this approach to immigration is too narrow "as it revolves around market calculations that typically involve accruing maximal economic gains with minimal financial outlay, where cost-cutting (for governments), as well as money-making (for business), become leading considerations" (p. 109-110). It is also noted that the employers' participation in selecting the nominees could enhance employer-worker communication and respect, leading to higher worker retention, but "the lack of public involvement puts the employee in a vulnerable position, and the employer may be enticed to exploit these vulnerabilities" (Baxter, 2010 as cited by Flynn & Bauder, 2015, p. 548). Additionally, research demonstrates that "economic focused immigration policy might not work for rural regions, those with struggling economies, and those with high rates of out-migration (Dobrowolsky & Ramos, 2014 as cited by Yoshida et al., 2015, p. 8). Since economic migrants are skilled, they may choose to migrate "for non-economic reasons, such as lifestyle and family" (Angus Reid, 2013 as cited by Yoshida et al., 2015, p. 8). If the focus is to populate small city Canada, immigration strategies should favour other non-economic migrants as "retention rates for sponsored family and other non-economic immigrants are higher than immigrants in other landing categories" (Yoshida et al., 2015, p. 8). Scholars thus emphasize that to retain newcomers, an immigration strategy focused on economic migrants and labour market outcomes must also be supplemented with inclusion strategies that focus on community wellbeing (Carter et al., 2008; Burayidi, 2013).

An unintended consequence of the PNP has been competition between provinces and municipalities in immigrant attraction and retention through settlement provision. As previously noted, PNPs are designed to relieve the government from settlement service provision by enlisting the help of and mobilizing resources from employers. From a practical viewpoint, this offloading of settlement responsibilities can be counterproductive to the aims of regionalization. Players who have not traditionally been involved in settlement services are now faced with the responsibility to fill settlement provision gaps, perhaps without the knowledge and resources required to support newcomers and the receiving community. A failed integration process at the local scale due to inadequate settlement services may lead to newcomers and their family's relocating elsewhere, which would defeat one of the main purposes of the PNPs. Indeed, scholars point out that the strategies to achieve regionalization have been met with challenges. Golebiowska (2009) demonstrates that "in absolute numbers, net settlement in less populated provinces is still too low to influence current demographic trends" (as cited by Valade, 2017, p. 42). It is suggested that secondary migration is impactful to the out-migration of provincial nominees and for this reason does not significantly influence population growth in small and mid-sized cities across Canada.

Cautious of the effect the neoliberalization of settlement service provision has on the settlement experience, we cannot deny the proliferation of immigration programs that continue to involve local and non-state actors, positively impacting the regionalization of immigration. Economic actors have been engaged through various federal and provincial immigration programs to address labour shortages and it is clear that employers understand

that attraction and retention require more than a good job, their efforts need to be framed within a wider support eco-system that involves other stakeholders and relevant partnerships. In the face of a fast-changing and competitive labour market, employers are stepping up as intentional and strategic actors in the realm of immigration and settlement. This is especially true for small- and medium-sized cities across Canada who are uniquely addressing these challenges. It is thus in our best interest to continue to investigate the potential for private employers to engage in settlement work as strategic and intentional actors.

Canada recognizes the role of employers in recruiting and retaining foreign workers. Consider the two-step migration selection process as evidence of employer engagement in migration matters. Since the late 1990's pathways to permanent residency for temporary migrants, including international students, has been made possible through the PNP and the Canadian Experience Class (Hou et al., 2020a, p. 1). Through the expansion of two-step immigration selection, which refers to "the selection of economic immigrants from among temporary foreign workers" (Hou et al., 2020a, p. 1), there has been an increase in the number of temporary foreign workers who have become permanent residents. Over the 2000 to 2018 period, Statistics Canada reported an increase in the number of temporary foreign workers from 60,000 to 429,300 and "among the temporary foreign workers who obtained their first work permits in the early 2000s, over one-third became permanent residents within the subsequent 10 years" (Hou et al., 2020a, p. 9). Not only have studies observed a positive correlation between the two-step immigration selection process and an increase in permanent residency among temporary migrants, but the process also reflects positive labour market outcomes among economic migrants who were former temporary foreign workers (Hou et al., 2020b). In the two-step immigration selection process "employers recruit and evaluate temporary foreign workers, while the government decides how many and which temporary foreign workers are eligible for admission as permanent residents, based on a set of criteria" (Hou et al., 2020a, p. 1). There is potential then to expand the two-step migration selection process in small and mid-sized cities across, as the evidence demonstrates that migrants who connect with employers through temporary stays can benefit from successful integration and long-term settlement. Beyond effective policy, employers also need to demonstrate an understanding of integration needs and support their workers. The following good practices are a display of employer engagement in the integration of migrants.

Good Practice #4

How Employers Deliver Pre-arrival and Settlement Support

Maple Leaf's opened its Brandon facility in 1999 as a world-class processing plant. Despite its impressive size and modernity, the facility struggled to retain workers for jobs that were hard, repetitive and undesirable for many. Maple Leaf turned to overseas recruitment to satisfy its workforce needs and to reduce turnover. Today Maple Leaf's Brandon facility employs around 2,000 hourly, unionized workers, the majority of whom are either temporary foreign workers or new residents who have passed through the foreign worker program.

The company provides extensive pre and post-arrival supports to its workers. Before migrants arrive in Canada, they have received up to 160 hours of English language training. They also received an orientation package about Canadian culture, community and settlement information.

After the workers arrive, support continues, including additional ESL support. In Maple Leaf Foods' Brandon, Manitoba plant, English classes are run after hours and on weekends in an on-site training facility. Funded by the union and by Maple Leaf Foods, classes are free for workers.

Good Practice #5

Fostering Entrepreneurship

The City of Fredericton, New Brunswick embraces immigration as a critical strategy to address population decline. A focus on entrepreneurship is a critical component of Fredericton's population and economic growth strategy. This is demonstrated by Fredericton's award-winning Business Immigrant Mentorship Program (BIMP), a mentorship program launched in 2009 to support newcomers with business registration, accounting, taxes, knowledge of the local economy, and more. The program's success is measured by many variables, including job creation, retention of newcomers, the growing business network of immigrants and its replicability. Many programs have been launched from the BIMP's success. For example, the Hive Incubator program is a co-location facility in the city's prime real estate district that has been providing entrepreneurial newcomers 24/7 access to space, a business address, a business mailbox, chamber of commerce membership and more since 2014.

Shaping Public Institutions and Public Spaces

More people are moving today than ever before. In the past, migration was led by destination countries who exercised their choices about recruiting talent. Today, by contrast, immigrants choose. Migrants are increasingly in charge, choosing from a wider variety of destination countries and voting for these choices with their feet. In other words, a buyers' market has turned into a sellers' market as migrants are courted for their money, their skills, and their talent. The imperative to deliver integration and inclusion to them, quicker, faster, and better is very clear. Indeed, the best integration strategies focus on making cities attractive to potential migrants and creating conditions for investment, attachment, and belonging.

At the forefront of desirable conditions for regional growth, economic development, and immigrant attraction is Richard Florida's (2002) creative class theory that proposes "regional economic growth is driven by the location choices of a group of people that engage in complex problem solving that involves a great deal of independent judgement and requires high levels of education or human capital" (as cited by Lepawsky et al., 2010, p. 329). The creative class theory suggests that "regions should make or enhance the quality of place characteristics that attract and retain the creative class to stimulate economic growth. It is a case of attracting and retaining talented people, rather than attracting businesses per se" (Florida, 2002, as cited by Lepawsky et al., 2010, p. 329). The creative city theory is complementary to the notion that existing infrastructure and city assets be harnessed, elevated, and transformed to meet the needs of a growing diverse population. Since immigrants choose and Canadian immigration policy heavily targets skilled workers, it should be noted that economic opportunity is simply one aspect influencing a migrant's decision. While the economic opportunity may motivate one to migrate, the cultural and social environment certainly directs one's decision to stay. It's said that the creative city as

a concept is heralded by policymakers and municipal leaders who understand the advances a city can make when "cultural libertarianism" and "neoliberal economic imperatives" are embraced (Hatuka et al., 2018, p. 168). The creative city theory is compelling, scholars caution, however, that local actors can be "seduced by the false promise of a 'creativity fix' in which any and every city can win the battle for talent" (Hatuka et al., 2018, p. 168).

The creative city theory as a component of many local economic development policies has been criticized for exacerbating income inequality (Donegan & Lowe, 2008). In response, Florida emphasizes the role of low-wage service sector employees, noting their "creative energy and talent" (Donegan & Lowe, 2008, p. 46). Florida touched on the issue of wages at the Future of Florida Forum in 2016, stating "[C]ompanies that invest in service workers, pay them more, get them involved in quality, see them as a source of customer engagement… have more productivity, higher profits" (Brinkmann, 2016). Florida continued to state that "[I]t's important that we upgrade the service economy if we want to build a fully sustainable economy… There's no better place to make the retail sector part of the creative economy" (Brinkmann, 2016). The rhetoric to support the service economy and low-wage workers is complementary to Canada's immigration objectives that seek to expand low-wage immigration programs (Dobrowolsky, 2013, p. 197).

The creative city theory offers a unique angle to address the challenges to attracting and retaining immigrants as it posits that cultural transformations have the potential to foster feelings of belonging and create spaces for social and cultural inclusion. Building on this notion, urban scholars emphasize the potential for place-based or anchor institutions to create the conditions for inclusion. the role of place-based or anchor institutions are drawn on as supports to enhance the settlement experience of new residents, as well as act as a strategic partner in building resilience in small and mid-sized cities across Canada (Zwick et al., 2018, p. 3). Place-based or anchor institutions refer to sites like universities and hospitals. Such institutions are highlighted as key stakeholders in city building because they often "employ hundreds or even thousands of people, contribute to the local economy, and often generate other community benefits and knowledge spillovers that can provide stability in the face of economic shocks" (Zwick et al., 2018, p. 3). It is noted that 16 out of 22 campuses are located outside of Toronto and Ontario (Zwick et al., 2018, p. 6). Universities are significant actors, not only because they are "significant purchasers of local goods and services that, magnified by multiplier effects, have considerable direct and indirect impacts on their wider local economy" (Siegfried et al., 2007) but because they play a symbolic role in "promoting urban resilience in their host communities" (Zwick et al., 2018, p. 6).

Every city has a unique culture and historical character that can be shaped to welcome newcomers. Considering a city's place characteristics, public institutions and businesses can be enhanced to attract and retain newcomers. An infrastructure of support for newcomers relies on the support and transformation of existing public institutions and/ or local industries like your local hospital, schools, libraries to take part in creating the conditions for inclusivity. Transformations within these sectors may come in the form of inclusive HR policies, cost-free barriers for participation, resources in multiple languages, or initiatives like language learning on the job. More importantly, such initiatives of newcomer support can be individualized and custom to each city and their needs. Consider the case studies below to understand how public spaces and anchor institutions are adapted to meet the needs of a growing diverse community.

Good Practice #6

Inclusion on Public Transit

A free transit pass for newcomers helps refugees access city services, get to work or school, and explore the city along with their new neighbours.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion, which also houses the Local Immigration Partnership, came up with several recommendations to provide support for the refugees in Halifax. Halifax Regional Council recognized that "the attraction and retention of refugees is also likely to contribute to the strength of Halifax's economy and community and align with previous Council direction."

Perhaps the most tangible public initiative was the creation of the Welcomed in Halifax (WIH) pass. The pass gives arriving refugees one year of free access to public transportation and municipal recreation facilities and programs (such as swimming lessons, summer camps and many more programs for all family members). Local museums and the Canada Games Centre also provided free admission and access to programs for WIH pass holders.

Up and running in time for the Syrian refugee arrivals in December of 2015, by early 2016 the program was running smoothly. According to Roberto Montiel, Coordinator of HRM Local Immigration Partnership (LIP), the intention was to make the WIH card available to all refugees, not only the newly arriving Syrians. In 2017 WIH pass eligibility was expanded to refugee-claimants. The city works with the Immigration Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) and the Halifax Refugee Clinic to distribute WIH cards to new refugee arrivals.

Good Practice #7

Healthcare Services for All

Health is a settlement issue.

The Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre reflects that reality. A partnership between a local multi-service immigrant and refugee-serving agency (CCI Ottawa) and Somerset West Community Health Centre, the Centre provides culturally competent integration and healthcare services. Co-located in the same building, the Centre has created seamless service transitions between very different service systems.

A full-service medical clinic provides short-term medical services to newcomers until they find a permanent doctor or health-care team.

A Health Navigator program is made up of specially trained, multilingual staff/guides who provide short-term advice and guidance to newcomers to navigate the local health system. The Centre was replicated and built on a Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op from Edmonton, Alberta. The Ottawa model is open to any clients who need any kind of health navigation support. This open eligibility has been important. The Centre has found that even citizens who return after a long period sometimes need help to re-navigate the healthcare system.

A key goal of the Centre's workers is to educate newcomers about the health care system and employ them to navigate it on their own. Their goal is not to create long-term clients for their medical clinic, but to move clients to more permanent healthcare providers. Clients are allowed to access services for two years. It's working; on average, clients access services for 14 months. They gain enough understanding of the system to act on their own and access services.

Conclusion

In summary, this paper recognizes the immigration imperative for small and mid-sized cities across Canada, according to the challenges for population growth and economic development. This paper addresses challenges in attracting and retaining immigrants and offers a critique of current immigrant regionalization strategies. Observing how settlement service provision and associated resources get allocated to immigrant dense areas, this paper offers solutions to strengthen attraction and retention efforts in new gateways of migration. Under the auspices of neoliberal immigration programs and policies, this paper argues for more alignment between provincial and municipal immigration agendas, an elevated role for municipal leadership, and a coordinated approach to immigration planning involving local stakeholders. The neoliberalization of immigration and settlement service provision can have competing and conflicting effects in small and mid-sized cities, however, this paper argues that municipal leadership, positive public narratives about immigration, local strategies, and welcoming public institutions can help diffuse such challenges. In articulating the nuance and complexity of the migration experience, this paper emphasizes the role of social inclusion in the policies and public institutions that shape any city. Concluding that efforts to achieve social cohesion among a diverse population not only benefits all residents but is a reflection of a community's preparedness to welcome newcomers, critical to the success of immigrant attraction and retention strategies.

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