

**ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS
INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES**

**ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS
INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES**

Prepared For:

Newfoundland and Labrador Association of
Community Business Development Corporations
(NLACBDC)

&

Newfoundland and Labrador Regional
Economic Development Association
(NLREDA)

Prepared By:

Halima Musabekova

January 15, 2009

27 Ricketts Rd
St. John's, NL A1C 2J6

January 15, 2009

Ms. Roseanne Leonard
Managing Director of
Newfoundland and Labrador
Association of Community
Business Development
Corporations
980 Topsail Rd
Mount Pearl, NL A1N 3K2

Dear Ms. Leonard:

Enclosed is the report, requested as a joint initiative of the NLACBDC and Newfoundland and Labrador Regional Economic Development Association in November 2008, as a part of my work term. The purpose of this report is to present materials that could assist rural communities in attraction and retention of new Canadians. The report discusses current demographic situation in Canada, best practices across the country, and useful tools for rural communities in their efforts of welcoming newcomers.

I would be pleased to discuss this report with you at any time. If you have any questions, please, feel free to contact me at (709) 726 0218.

Sincerely,

Halima Musabekova

Enclosure

27 Ricketts Rd
St. John's, NL A1C 2J6

January 15, 2009

Mr. Ted Lomond
Executive Director of
Newfoundland and Labrador
Regional Economic
Development Association
460 Torbay Rd
St. John's, NL A1A 5J3

Dear Mr. Lomond:

Enclosed is the report, requested as a joint initiative of the NLREDA and Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Community Business Development Corporations in November 2008, as a part of my work term. The purpose of this report is to present materials that could assist rural communities in attraction and retention of new Canadians. The report discusses current demographic situation in Canada, best practices across the country, and useful tools for rural communities in their efforts of welcoming newcomers.

I would be pleased to discuss this report with you at any time. If you have any questions, please, feel free to contact me at (709) 726 0218.

Sincerely,

Halima Musabekova

Enclosure

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL	iii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	v
INTRODUCTION	1
ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES	3
SOME TYPES OF IMMIGRATION PROGRAMS	3
Economic Classes & Refugees	3
International Students & Temporary Foreign Workers	6
Provincial Nominee Program	7
RURAL COMMUNITIES	11
Advantages of Rural Communities	11
Promoting Rural Communities	12
GETTING ORGANIZED	13
Situational Analysis	13
Leadership & Team	15
NEWCOMERS' MOTIVATIONS & EXPECTATIONS	19
Housing & Education	22
Employment	24
Language Training	26
Leisure Time Activities	28
BARRIERS	29
Barriers to Health Care	31
Credentials as Barriers	33
Isolation as a Barrier	34
Racism & Discrimination Barriers	36
INCENTIVES	40
ACTUAL INTEGRATING	41
Greeting	41
Accommodations	42
CONCLUSION	45
RECOMMENDATIONS	46
WORK CITED	49

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I am pleased to present this report for the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Community Business Development Corporations (NLACBDC) and Newfoundland and Labrador Regional Economic Development Association (NLREDA) as a part of my work term project.

The report contains useful information for smaller communities that engage in immigrant recruitment. It outlines what these communities are likely to experience as well as the challenges they are likely to face. It also offers suggestions and tools to assist communities in addressing these challenges.

The report also analyzes some desired outcomes of the immigration to rural areas, types of immigration programs, and identifies the effective ways of what welcoming communities should do in order to succeed.

The project was completed by using the information from reputable internet based and government reports.

INTRODUCTION

According Social Science Federation of Canada and Statistics Canada in 1871 over 80% of people were living in rural areas as opposed to over 80% of Canadians living in urban centers these days. People generally, and youth in particular, in search of economic opportunities are moving to larger urban centers such as Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver – the primary destinations of immigrants in Canada.

According to the UN demographers the world's population has passed 6 billion. The population doubled between 1960 and 2000 and it is expected to peak at around 9 billion in the middle of the 21st century. Due to the use of birth control, improvements in standards of living, the mortality of the baby boom generation, and the HIV/AIDS epidemic the world's population is predicted to decline latter part of the 21st century.

Within this global context Canada's population will stabilize and decline as well. If Canada continues with its current immigration strategy its population will stop growing at about 40 million around the time when the world's population will be leveling off mid-century.

Smaller communities will be affected by these global and national population trends too.

This report is intended to help rural communities to attract and retain newcomers. Resources and best practices from across the country provide additional ideas for incorporating immigrants and refugees into smaller communities and developing an overall population strategy to attract and retain newcomers.

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

Immigration is not a quick cure for the population concerns of small communities; however, it offers a large potential to assist in the growth of the communities. It is important to assess the situation thoroughly and gain support for an immigration strategy before proceeding.

SOME TYPES OF IMMIGRATION PROGRAMS

Economic Classes & Refugees

Trends in immigration and secondary migration, especially with regards to temporary foreign workers, Provincial Nominee Programs and international education have changed significantly since 2005. These changes have increased competition amongst the provinces/territories, cities, towns, and communities hoping to attract and retain newcomers. Community profiles and population statistics can be found at

<http://www.statcan.ca/>

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

Canada's major immigration focus is within specific Economic Classes of its immigration categories, and here the main emphasis is on obtaining Skilled Workers for the country's needs. Economic Class immigrants enter Canada under one of the following programs:

Skilled Worker Immigrants program for individuals entering Canada lists the following requirements for applicants such as:

- Formal education,
- Work experience,
- Knowledge of English or French, and other skills helpful to establish themselves as permanent residents.

Another category within Economic Classes is

Business Immigrants for individuals who can

- Invest in, or
- Start a business in Canada.

There are three subcategories of business immigrants:

- *Entrepreneurs* (Entrepreneurs must demonstrate business experience capital to establish a business and create job opportunities)
- *Investors* (Entrants must demonstrate business experience and obtain capital for investment) and

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

- *Self-employed* (Persons must have the intention and ability to create their own employment)

The technical requirements to qualify in these classifications need to be understood in the light of a community's needs and opportunities. More information on the requirements can be found at the provincial and federal government websites: <http://www.gov.nl.ca>

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/skilled/apply-who.asp>

Refugee immigrants can be also contributing members of the community and fit into the population strategy.

- *Government Assisted Refugees (GAR) - are the only class of immigrants that can be assigned specifically to your community. They are free to move within Canada.*
- *Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR) – is a program that can be the most immediate opportunity for a population strategy.*

The PSR program has its advantages such as being

- Inexpensive,
- Self-initiating; it
- Offers best hope of retention (assuming the community is welcoming and prepared to meet the needs of newcomers); it also
- Has the fewest federal and provincial government requirements

The program allows a small centre to

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

- Build future in-flows as an “echo effect,”
- Involve the wider volunteer community

PSR or GAR refugees are permanent residents of Canada from the moment they arrive and usually want their friends and family to be sponsored as well. Communities need to be sensitive to the fact that refugees may be dealing with considerable trauma while adjusting to a new culture as well as changing economic, professional and social standing. In many cases, circumstances beyond their control have forced them to make a drastic change in their lifestyle.

International Students & Temporary Foreign Workers

International students and temporary foreign workers are prospective immigrants already living in Canada can be a source of community expertise in immigration and marketing processes.

International students have become an important economic and social contributor to communities across Canada through enrollment in universities, colleges and K to 12 programs.

**In Newfoundland, the Eastern School Board delivers K-12 and ESL to international students, and provides services to help integrate the children of immigrants into the school system.*

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

The Humber Education Alliance is an incorporated agency formed in 2002 by the College of the North Atlantic, Memorial University, Academy Canada and the Western School District.

**In Atlantic Canada, for example, there are seventeen universities, and approximately 6,300 international students.*

** In British Columbia and Saskatchewan, the provincial governments have established online resources to advise prospective international students of the advantages of choosing a university within their province as their education destination.*

Provincial Nominee Program

Although the immigration process falls under the Federal Government jurisdiction each province also has a Nominee Program in place. PNP designed to ease the federal immigration process for qualified newcomers such as international students, temporary foreign workers, business or industrial professionals, and entrepreneurs into a community.

Throughout Canada, some cultural communities are active in recruiting immigrants from their country of origin.

**In Québec the Romanian community has a website encouraging immigration to Québec City. Available in Romanian and French, it can be viewed at <http://www.reper-romanesc.org/>*

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

**In Manitoba, Steinbach is a recent successful example of immigration strategy in a rural community. Steinbach was a community unable to meet the labour requirements of growing business industries, and engaged immigration consultants to actively recruit labour in Germany. Steinbach offered arrivals the opportunity for open spaces, excellent schools and plentiful work. As a result, over 1300 Germans (including many who had previously emigrated from Russia) immigrated to Steinbach between 1999 and 2004. By communicating and clarifying why immigration is a positive action for the community, concerns over job security and housing prices being driven up were eliminated.*

Having a majority of the community informed about the immigration process led to a positive experience and greater success. Key components of a successful local immigration strategy in Steinbach are:

- Excellent partnerships with government and the community,*
- Media profile,*
- A champion, who is willing to take on the challenges of change and a plan for the evolution of local partnerships.*

**In British Columbia recent changes to the program have resulted in greater numbers of Business Class immigrants settling in smaller centers*

**New Brunswick's one-half of the immigrants are provincial nominees.*

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

**British Columbia is the gateway to the Asia Pacific region and the Maritimes to the Middle East.*

**Saskatchewan became a home to one-quarter of the nominees. In Saskatchewan the Provincial Nominee Program has been active in addressing labour market shortages. In 2006-2007 more than 170 employers of Saskatoon city hired 511 newcomers. Due the success of the program the government has established a regional immigration office in Saskatoon specifically to support the local business community and integrate newcomers into the workforce.*

**In Québec, Conseil d'Affaires et de Culture Québec-Bulgaria has a business portal in Bulgaria.*

**In Nova Scotia regional economic development agencies and Francophone organizations are empowered to nominate a limited number of Provincial Nominees—usually international students and temporary foreign workers. The province also worked with the Lebanese community to develop a Family Business Worker Stream, which enables immigrant entrepreneurs to sponsor family members who will then assist them in their business. This holds further potential for many small centers.*

** In Québec, rural communities such as La Malbaie in Charlevoix and Saint-Raymond in Portneuf attracted 145 and 75 immigrant newcomers respectively in 2001—are turning to immigration to sustain growth.*

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

Some small communities are gaining labour market benefits due a high number of newcomers and the availability of jobs for them.

** Prince George in British Columbia,*

** Canmore and Lethbridge in Alberta, and*

** Winkler and Steinbach in Manitoba are the examples of such approach. Winkler has more immigrants per capita than any other small centre in Canada.*

**In the Yukon government representatives and members of the Yukon Medical Association met to aid and speed up the immigration process of physicians to the region. The recent arrival of two physicians and their families boosted the local population and improved health care in the region*

**In Prince Edward Island two thirds of all immigrants are provincial nominees*

There are other possibilities of attracting immigrants. Many faith communities in rural areas may already have the legal capacity to sponsor refugees, but most will likely be inactive due the lack of knowledge of the process. Encouraging these groups has the potential to expand the capacity of the community to gain newcomers. For details visit the CIC website at <http://www.cic.gc.ca>

RURAL COMMUNITIES

Advantages of Rural Communities

Approximately 9 million people of Canada's population live in rural regions and almost half of Atlantic Canadians live in rural communities. Smaller communities do not have the institutional and community infrastructure to offer all the necessary supports for effective economic integration. To enhance rural immigration and help build a population strategy for small communities requires a long-term view be adopted. Communities must be patient and fully committed.

It is useful to make a list the community's advantages, strengths, and challenges in attracting newcomers. Naming the negatives without dwelling on them is essential. SWOT analysis can be a useful tool to identify internal and external factors of the community's advantages, strengths, and challenges where:

(S) = Strengths (e.g. safety, inexpensive housing, a low crime rate, proximity to nature, good schools, affordable lifestyle, and a low unemployment rate)

(W) = Weaknesses (e.g. internet or long distance telephone toll charges, lack of adequate medical care and/or services)

(O) = Opportunities (e.g. businesses for sale and/or industries' expansion)

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

(T) = Threats (e.g. aging population)

Smaller community may already have established ethnic communities that could attract, receive, and retain newcomers.

Many newcomers to Canada list “peace” and “low crime rates” as reasons for moving to Canada. Now it is an ideal time for these communities to promote alternatives to city living.

Smaller centers offer the advantage of personal safety. Promoting the safety realistically without overstating it and accentuating the positive in the materials to attract newcomers, having members of the police, emergency response services, and people who are knowledgeable regarding the immigration processes on the immigration council will enhance the likelihood that immigrants come to smaller communities.

Promoting Rural Communities

The internet is the first place where potential newcomers check for information and look to learn about Canadian communities. It is vital to have a website that is informative, engaging, and easy-to-navigate.

Linking the website to provincial, territorial, and federal sites promoting immigration and tourism is essential for any community interested in receiving newcomers. Community’s promotional materials such as books and pamphlets need to be well-developed. They should be prominently displayed and should draw attention to the region's features such as:

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

- A low unemployment rate
- Health care facilities
- Good schools
- A low crime rate
- Affordable lifestyle
- Proximity to nature

GETTING ORGANIZED

Situational Analysis

The need for labour can be driven in the industrial trades and service sectors; sometimes there's a need to recruit professionals like doctors and educators. If immigration is driven by specific labour market needs employers usually do their own research, marketing, and promotion. Their efforts can be included as a part of a community settlement plan. It is in the best interests of business and community to work together. It is not enough to be employer of choice; the community must also be community of choice.

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

Businesses could spend considerable time and money attracting new workers only to lose them because the community did not properly assist in the integration of the workers' families. The issues surrounding professional and trade accreditation need to be understood fully when skilled people are being attracted.

Usually there is a strong connection between economic development and a population strategy. For a population strategy there must be a consensus among opinion leaders and decision makers that your community needs more people. Strategies should be designed first to attract people then newcomers should be retained.

Questions to consider:

- Are there those who think it is misguided to focus on immigration while some current residents are unemployed?
- Does the community understand the population realities it faces (rates of births/deaths, aging of the baby boomer generation)
- Have these realities been identified and documented?
- Does the community have a vision of its future?
- What plans are in place?
- Is immigration the right fit for your community?

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

Leadership & Team

It is vital for smaller communities working together around the immigration idea which requires leadership and effective community-based team. It is best when there is political leadership from municipal, provincial, federal government and community development organizations.

Ensuring the involvement of business people, educators, healthcare workers, churches, volunteers for preparing the community to respond to the diverse needs of immigrants is essential.

It is also necessary to be open with communities' media as plans develop and share the full results of the work by having a press conference or individual meetings in order to bring the larger community on your side.

Small communities may need to develop a budget to finance expenses and hire a skilled consultant, knowledgeable about Canada's immigration laws and strategic planning. Potential key players for planning and implementing immigration strategy of the community can be:

- Community business development centres
- Regional economic development boards
- Government (three levels) and regional municipalities

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

- Employers
- English and French language training programs
- Immigrant settlement agencies
- Educational institutions
- Religious institutions
- Health care institutions and agencies
- Law enforcement agencies and advocacy groups
- Professional and trades unions/associations
- Community service providers (libraries, recreation providers)
- Ethnic community groups or/and newcomers among you
- Housing associations and landlords
- Media

For rural communities, it is difficult to offer services with a sufficient degree of specialization. Successfully retaining even small number of immigrants requires significant resources and may present challenges to rural communities. This requires substantial human resources to coordinate effectively.

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

Identifying people who can provide resources and skills needed for settlement and establishing partnerships with community stakeholders for the delivery of services can be another useful tool for a community in receiving and retaining of newcomers.

Smaller communities need to pay attention to the quality of life they provide to their residents and give them reasons to stay. It is best to be proactive in determining and addressing what are the potential issues in immigrant settlement of the arriving population and developing a community immigration strategy.

**In Alberta, Brooks is called the multi-cultural capital of Alberta which is a typical small Alberta town of ranchers, farmers and gritty oil patch workers. Major stakeholders work together on community planning to become responsive to newcomers. Brooks' largest employer is doing well because of employment opportunities.*

One quarter of the plant's 2,400 employees is immigrants mostly from Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Congo who are the part of the community of 12,500. The immigrant population is more than 2,000 strong and comes from more than 98 countries. Every African country is represented in Brooks. Brooks provides settlement and employment services, ESL courses to more than 500 people a year.

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

**In Florenceville, New Brunswick, McCain Foods Ltd. is a good example of employers in a community who have organized a drive to get immigrants for business expansion. Over the years, it has welcomed immigrants from China, India, Cuba, Colombia, Palestine, Egypt, the Netherlands, the United States, Great Britain, Ghana, Morocco, South Africa, the Philippines, and elsewhere.*

**In Kelowna, British Columbia the community participated in the recruitment mission to encourage skilled worker immigration from France. Industry leaders from the regional economic development agency and the aviation industry joined the Government of British Columbia in France to directly recruit skilled workers through the BC Provincial Nominee Program. The local Francophone community made plans to actively welcome and integrate the prospective newcomers into the community.*

**In Nova Scotia, the provincial government launched its own immigration strategy in 2005.*

**New Brunswick launched a Population Growth Secretariat April 1, 2007 which deals with demographic concerns, the migration of young workers, repatriation of New Brunswick workers, and the increase of long term settlement of immigrants in the province.*

**Manitoba has established an Immigration Council to advise the provincial government on its immigration initiatives.*

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

**In Quebec, Sherbrooke has published its “Immigrant Welcome & Integration Policy” as a part of its strategy.*

**In British Columbia the Community Futures Development Association plays a central role in coordinating and implementing a variety of local development initiatives, including regional immigration initiatives.*

**In Alberta regional economic development authorities are playing a major role in supporting communities to become more welcoming of immigrants.*

More information can be found at:

<http://www.communityfutures.ca/provincial/bci>

NEWCOMERS’ MOTIVATIONS & EXPECTATIONS

Immigrants arrive with complex and varied motivations, expectations, needs, and modes of living. Immigrant families move to rural areas out of a concern for the security, wellbeing, and future prospects for their children.

New arrivals that are from a range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds bring with them a diversity of needs, many of which can be unknown until arrival and settlement. A key component is the degree of awareness and sensitivity within the community to the unique needs of newcomers.

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

The econometric analysis of immigrant settlement patterns in Atlantic Canada points out that new immigrants will choose to settle in smaller areas if

- they are able to secure employment and
- the area has an existing immigrant and visible minority

Research by Statistics Canada has shown that the most significant reason immigrants choose a new home is the importance of family ties. Research also has shown that for immigrants with higher levels of education family ties or cultural communities are less important when choosing a community. It is useful to remember that there may be extended family members outside of Canada who want to join their families. The information about individuals who have relatives abroad can help initiate a second wave of immigration after the first wave has settled into your community.

For skilled immigrants in the selection of settlement location to live in rural settings the most important factors are:

- Employment (it is important to be clear about what can be offered in terms of employment)
- Housing
- Safe, clean and friendly communities
- Low cost of living

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

- Educational facilities,
- Cultural, and recreational opportunities,
- Access to interesting backcountry and national amenities can play a part in attracting and retaining newcomers

In order to increase the attractiveness of the community to potential newcomers, and inspire them about living in smaller centers their municipalities should:

- Encourage visits to rural areas/communities by prospective immigrants to allow for first hand knowledge and a factual response to that area.
- Build recruitment strategies around conveying the positive experiences of immigrants who have already settled in a region by partnering with Memorial University to invite interested students on a tour of the community and including the testimonials in promotional materials afterward.
- Determine all motivating factors in relation to settling in an area and what aspects of life immigrants enjoy in particular and accurately convey:
 - Feedback from immigrants who have already settled in rural areas/communities
 - Messages that speaks to a community/region's strength

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

- Develop intake procedures and feedback mechanisms to enable settlement efforts (it will allow the broad community to assist in connecting immigrants to the necessary services/people).

Housing & Education

Community facilities, services and programs must be accessible and affordable for newcomers. Affordable homes can be an important attraction if brought to the attention of newcomers. Some communities have offered free building lots and civic tax holidays. Information on availability of housing in different price ranges will be of interest to many newcomers. Some people choose communities for good housing in their price range. This ranks close to family ties and employment as a reason for selecting a particular community. It is especially true for people

- whose skills are in demand anywhere (health care workers) who are planning their retirement; or those
- who are part of the new home-and internet-based economy and can practice their trade anywhere

Housing needs to be affordable (landlords should be prepared to modify reference or damage deposit requirements to accommodate international newcomers).

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

The Newcomers Guide to Housing offers a more thorough examination of this important consideration for communities throughout Canada. For more details visit:

<http://www.cmhc.gc.ca/en/co/buho/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&PageID=93728>

**In Québec, in 2007 Sherbrooke began constructing 30 apartments specifically for newcomers with families of seven or more people who have had difficulty finding appropriate housing. The Newcomers Guide to Housing offers a more detailed examination of this important consideration for communities throughout Canada.*

Another issue of a new arrival is arranging bank financing for homes and cares. Canadian financial institutions may not recognize foreign credit histories which makes difficult for newcomers to obtain a mortgage. Credit Unions may be able to help with this. Other options to consider are:

- Applying for a credit card from a gasoline company
- Joining a credit union at work or in the community
- Applying to a bank for a personal banking services package deal - they often include a bank credit card.
- Applying for a loan from a bank or any other lending institution - and pay it off promptly

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

Access to good educational facilities is one of the reasons some people choose to live in particular communities. They may be temporary residents, intending to remain for a time, but they are part of the community's economy, and have potential to become permanent residents if they like the community and see opportunity in it. Schools need to be welcoming and accommodating for newcomers with different language abilities, cultural backgrounds and learning styles.

The Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation e-learning team within Newfoundland and Labrador provides access to educational opportunities for students, teachers and other learners in rural and urban communities of the province. More information can be accessed at <http://www.stemnet.nf.ca/>, Memorial University's distance education programs at <http://www.distance.mun.ca/> , and College of the North Atlantic [distributed learning service](http://dls.cna.nl.ca/) at <http://dls.cna.nl.ca/>

Employment

Usually from 10 to 15% of available jobs are advertised. Rural community should make every effort to widen the posting of available jobs by spreading the news and by helping newcomers tap into the hidden job market.

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

Employers and communities must clearly communicate to immigrants before they arrive what jobs are available and what immigrant workers can and cannot do because of language and credentials concerns. Employers must be aware of potentially different impressions around work habits, workplace dynamics and additional needs of immigrant workers.

It is essential to keep in mind that some newcomers may be self-employed, have been or become entrepreneurs, or reestablish themselves in their trade or profession. Many Canadians commute considerable distances to work thus there may be those who live in small communities and work elsewhere or vice versa. Both should be recognized and valued by the communities' population strategies.

**In Ontario, Skills for Change offers English as a Second Language/Accounting program for immigrant women among its English language training classes. Over of 11 weeks course the students are prepared for careers in accounting. Upon graduation, they may be eligible to join the agency's Clerical/Employment Services Program.*

<http://www.skillsforchange.org>

**English and French language training programs to assist internationally educated immigrants reenter jobs of their field visit*

<http://www.goingtocanada.gc.ca/>

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

**Mentoring volunteer programs that are employed by governments and corporations have a successful history of introducing newcomers to the Canadian workplace. Volunteers from Canadian trades and professions assist newcomers on a personal, one-on-one basis to discuss the barriers in getting reestablished.*

**"Teach in Ontario" is a program that assists internationally trained teachers being prepared for certification and help them to find employment afterward. The program also deals with the high demand for qualified teachers of French, chemistry, physics, computer studies, math, and technological studies. More information at <http://www.skillsforchange.org>*

Language Training

Language training is one of the three needs most consistently identified by immigrants when they are asked about their community integration process. Rural areas need to be creative to meet immigrant needs, including language provision. This involves a whole-community response, including the participation of employers. This can include:

- Offering flexible classes that respond to needs and schedules
- Providing daycare opportunities for newcomers' children.
- Employing volunteer resources (retired English/French teachers as tutors/conversation partners and community schools) willing to assist with translation and interpretation needs

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

- Developing a list of local residents who are fluent in other languages. Interpreters can provide newcomers and community members with important cultural information that aids full understanding and help in facilitating communication between newcomers and employers, local businesses, and service providers.
- Listing necessary information in several languages other than English and French on community website. This will communicate to immigrants and refugees “you are welcome here”
- Making use of time/space efficiencies such as delivering workplace ESL on site after work leads to higher numbers using language services.

The income of recent immigrants with a university degree, diploma or certificate is 40% less than non-immigrants with comparable levels of education. This trend is attributed to the most common barrier which is a lack of proficiency in English or French. Basic English skill classes do not cover the more technical language that newcomers require to enter their chosen professions.

The Provincial and Federal governments must be encouraged to assist communities in securing funding for ESL classes, as well as funding for the buildings that these classes will be held in.

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

**A good example is the Essential Skills Technical English Curricula (ESTEC) for Engineers that helps to enhance communication skills of internationally trained engineers or graduates to the levels of Canadian Language Benchmarks to 7/8 or 9/10.*

Leisure Time Activities

Leisure time activities are exceptional integrating opportunities and a normalizing influence on the life of newcomers. Sharing it with newcomers is one of the best ways to create a hospitable environment while building new friendships, new experiences and new ties.

These can be both organized and individualized. Brainstorm the leisure activities in your community.

To introduce newcomers to your community's assets and lifestyle:

- Advertise and communicate the clubs and cafes, spectator sports, gardening, and hobbies to newcomers
- Provide guest tickets to cultural or sporting events
- Provide short-term memberships to newcomers in things like the YMCAs in Fort McMurray, AB, Yarmouth, NS and St. John's, NL

**In Ontario, Thunder Bay, The PROKids Program (Positive Recreational Opportunities) provides subsidized spaces in city run and other community activities, sports, music and recreational organizations for children from low-income families, and for newcomers.*

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

**In Quebec, Quebec City has a program that provides complimentary tickets to newcomers for the city's sports and cultural events.*

**Prince Edward Island has developed a program of International Friendship Teahouses for the mutual introduction of newcomers and islanders, where the focus is on “people talking to each other”.*

Depending on the size and sensitivity of your community, you may wish to consider extending guest ticket programs to social allowance recipients to avoid a possible backlash that might harm the successful integration and acceptance of newcomers. <http://www.pch.gc.ca>

**Canada's Department of Canadian Heritage has a website with topics like Arts&Culture, Citizenship & Identity, Diversity & Multiculturalism, Sport, and Youth.*

BARRIERS

Misinformation and lack of knowledge about rural areas are barriers to recruiting and retaining strategies. Information gaps between immigrants and community are extremely frustrating for immigrants. Many immigrants become entrepreneurs or they purchase existing businesses. Very often there is a gap in connecting individuals wishing to sell businesses and newcomers willing to buy them.

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

It remains important to bridge this gap and communicate clear information about immigration processes to the communities that immigrants have been invited and welcomed for specific purposes, as well as to challenge the unfortunate criticisms and the often-heard myth that “immigrants steal our jobs, abuse our system, and drive up housing prices”. They, oppositely, will contribute into a community and stimulate its economy by creating jobs and demands for goods and services.

Newcomers often enter jobs for which there are no local applicants. To ensure clear communications about community and assist newcomers with settlement issues creating a telephone hotline and website for newcomers to communicate directly with a person who provides information would eliminate misinformation gaps.

Additional barriers in attracting and retaining new Canadians in rural areas are

- Canadian old hiring practices (references from someone known in community, giving preferences to local work experience, conducting interviews using advanced levels of English or French)
- Lack of Canadian work experience
- Lack of mentoring, internships and apprenticeships
- Lack of information or misinformation before arrival
- Lack of labour market information

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

- High cost of living (to join a local recreation centre or limited access to public housing)
- Cultural differences and lack of newcomer's knowledge about Canadian culture
- Community's lack of cultural awareness and lack of support from community
- Lack of expertise of law enforcement agencies with the customs and traditions of newcomers
- Lack of books or audio-visual materials available in diverse languages or cultures in libraries
- Current living conditions in Newfoundland and Labrador
- Family issues

Barriers to Health Care

Communities need to be sensitive to its newcomers and be prepared to consider innovative accommodations. Language is one of the most common barriers to good health care thus solutions to remove barriers in health care may include:

- Ensuring the translation and interpretation services are available through hospitals and clinics or regional services like the Nurses' Hotline

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

- Providing a list of doctors fluent in languages other than French and English
- Ensuring that health care providers have access to the latest information on federal and provincial medical coverage to eliminate misinterpretation of insurance regulations on the availability of medical services to newcomers, particularly seniors
- Registering and listing community's healthcare facilities on community's website. Print a pamphlet that describes them.
- Providing transportation for newcomers to reach the ambulance and emergency health facilities at distance

**Recently, provinces and territories have started to deliver comprehensive and accessible TeleHealth programs enhancing health care programs for people living in isolated areas and those whose access to medical care is limited by culture, language or clinical resources (service is available in different languages; operators are trained in cultural sensitivity). Search for "TeleHealth" at to find different provincial and territorial resources at <http://search.hc-sc.gc.ca/cgi-bin>*

Credentials as Barriers

The largest barriers to finding a job are a lack of Canadian experience; transferring qualifications and language. Non-recognition of foreign credentials and qualifications is the barrier for skilled newcomers (Canadian Licensing standards and bodies).

Trained and educated newcomers from other countries have difficulty in having their foreign credentials or qualifications recognized.

**In 2007, the federal government launched the Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO) to help immigrants to get their credentials assessed more quickly. The FCRO provides in-person and telephone services through 320 outlets across the country as well as online at*

<http://www.credentials.gc.ca>

To assist newcomers with assessing and recognizing credentials communities should:

- Check the province website and governments' programs to support and fast-track retraining of trades people and professionals
- Assess own rules for trades and professional associations to ensure that there is openness to adding newcomers to their ranks
- Use mentoring programs to help professionals understand their new environment and deal with Canadian licensing requirements on an informed and facilitated basis

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

- Involve immigrants represented on welcoming committee to ensure of having first hand knowledge

**In 2007, the federal government launched the Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO) to help individuals who plan to work in Canada to get their credentials assessed more quickly.*

The FCRO provides in-person and telephone services through 320 outlets across the country as well as online.

<http://www.credentials.gc.ca>

**In Ontario, the municipality of Kincardine noting that communities across the province are facing a doctor shortage has passed a resolution to gain other municipalities support for legislation that removes barriers for internationally trained medical practitioners to obtain their medical licensing requirements.*

**In 2006, the Provincial government of Ontario passed the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act. The goal of the Act is to ensure that internationally trained professionals are given the opportunity to put their skills and experience to use, regardless of where they were trained.*

Isolation as a Barrier

Isolation is a barrier that may lead to adverse effects on immigrants' wellbeing and lessen the likelihood of retention.

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

Communities must be aware of the effects of social isolation in rural communities for immigrants and make efforts to connect those affected to appropriate services, and the wider life of the community.

Providing access to the internet, senior programs, and prenatal/parenting courses for newcomers' family members is another solution for eliminating such issues.

**In British Columbia, Vancouver-based immigrant organization SUCCESS's offers social and cultural activities, such as dancing, singing, painting, and ESL training for seniors.*

**In Manitoba, Steinbach, the isolation and loneliness of the partners and other family members not employed or engaged in community life was not originally considered while the employed member of the family had the opportunity to engage in community life. Many families did not remain in Steinbach to begin with, but once local agencies and churches began outreach with all family members, the situation has dramatically changed.*

**In Newfoundland, St. John's, The Association for New Canadians has a community room where newcomers and volunteers meet, seek advice, socialize, and exchange ideas in a relaxed, homelike atmosphere. The Association also coordinates a variety of recreational activities including sporting events, social nights, movies, summer barbecues, and holiday celebrations.*

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

More information can be accessed at

http://www.ancnf.cc/social_recreational_activities.html

Racism & Discrimination Barriers

Ethnocultural and linguistic differences between newcomers and local residents could give rise to racism or discrimination in the workplace or public facilities which are the potential barriers in retaining newcomers.

To recognize and prevent racism and other forms of unlawful discrimination welcoming communities need to raise intercultural awareness by:

- Ensuring the equitable treatment of those whose skin colour, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities and ethnic ancestries are different from the majority of residents in your community
- Inviting regular feedback (questionnaire, survey) at least once a year from culturally diverse clients to identify how your community is viewed by newcomers and community's strengths and weaknesses in welcoming diverse newcomers.

Questions that can be used in the surveys are:

- Why did you move to our community?
- What are the things you like about our community?

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

- What are the biggest challenges you have faced living in our community?
- Have you experienced any unfair treatment?
- Would you encourage friends and relatives to live in our community?
- Are you planning on staying in the community?
- What would you like to be provided or changed in order to remain in our community?

**The Host Program is an excellent model for volunteer involvement in welcoming newcomers. It has operated throughout Canada for many years, matching newcomers with community residents. Learn more about it at <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/newcomers/hostnewcomer.Asp>*

**In Manitoba, Winnipeg has been developed a program for schools that welcomes newcomer children with a type of “buddy” system. The Ambassador Program can be located through <http://www.miic.ca>*

**“New Moves: An Orientation Video for Newcomer Students” offers an inside-look at the experiences of 14 newcomer students, who talk about their adjustment to school in Canada and what helped them be successful. Among the issues discussed are differences in behavior expectations, teaching methods and communication with teachers and other students.*

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

Complemented by the comments of school administrators and images of life in Canadian schools, the video is available in 17 languages, including French and English at <http://www.newmoves.ca>

Some practical, straightforward steps smaller communities can take to welcome newcomers are:

- Forming anti-racism /welcoming diversity committee represented by government, business, labour, and ethnocultural organizations that is responsible for eliminating racism and ensuring all types of diversity.
- Providing intercultural/cross-cultural awareness/sensitivity training for local businesses, government, and community organizations
- Displaying on community website and in civic buildings a mission statement that promotes the importance of honoring diversity.
- Printing and distributing pamphlets in languages spoken by newcomers that describe website links to local ethnocultural organizations, settlement agencies, and community services (family class immigrants and refugees may not speak English or French)

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

- Hosting a diversity celebration that recognizes diversity in your community and incorporating food, art, fashion, music, games, storytelling into the event (a powerful way of encouraging cross-cultural understanding and sharing)
- Organizing annual community events
 - March 21 - the International Day for the Elimination of Racism or Multiculturalism Week event
 - June 27 - the Canadian Multiculturalism Day - where anti racism stickers can be distributed to schools, handed to children at shopping malls
- Organizing a series of events (concerts, dance presentations by First Nations or other multicultural groups, public readings of books by multicultural authors for children and adults) with schools, libraries, and other community stakeholders
- Displaying artworks at the malls or recreation centers

**In Alberta, the City of Red Deer, a town of 80,000 residents, is an example of a small community that has taken a number of significant steps to welcome new Canadians and create an inclusive community. A lot of useful tools and recommendations how to attract and retain international newcomers can be found at <http://www.city.red-deer.ab.ca>*

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

**In British Columbia Safe Harbours Program is a province-wide initiative that provides no-cost workshops to business, government and community organizations on how to welcome and better serve a diverse population and assist victims of discrimination. For information on Safe Harbours visit the website at <http://www.safeharbour.ca>*

**In New Brunswick the Multicultural Council offers a Cultural Competency Training Program for managers and team members in public and private sector workplaces to assist in managing diversity and creating welcoming environments. More information at <http://www.safeharbour.ca>
<http://www.nbmc.ca/English/programs.html>*

INCENTIVES

Communities should consider using and implementing incentives to attract and retain newcomers. To assist people moving into a community with the relocation costs would be a useful and immediate incentive. Another option can be creating a program of provincial income tax deductions that could be spread over three years that could also attract and retain new Canadians in the community of choice.

**In New Brunswick and Cape Breton, in Nova Scotia, government programs with incentives have had success in attracting “returnees”.*

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

Communities that have seen major employers close and with a stock of empty houses, have used these as an inexpensive attraction for retirees and others, to revitalize their communities.

Private initiatives directed at Europeans and Americans, have seen the building or purchase of summer homes in a number of small centres in Newfoundland and Labrador, and Cape Breton. Summer residents have become a significant factor throughout much of rural Canada such as Elliot Lake in northwestern Ontario and Deep Brook (Cornwallis) in western Nova Scotia.

**In Nova Scotia, provincial immigration fees have been eliminated. A replacement of these costs in cash or as a provincial/civic tax credit over three years could be used as an attraction and retention strategy.*

ACTUAL INTEGRATING

Greeting

If you know when newcomers are arriving welcome them at the airport, bus depot, or wherever they may be arriving. It is a good idea when possible to give the newcomers, or immigration authorities, a cell phone number where a key person in the community can be contacted and alerted to arrival delays.

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

Accommodations

Hotels for newcomers can be expensive for staying during the first days of their move. The following steps can be taken:

- Suggesting options such as B&Bs, hostels, or private homes or arrangements that are made for a discounted rate with a hotel with meals included
- Accommodating needs of diverse clients (for people who cannot eat certain foods due to religious beliefs are offered healthy, tasty and appropriate alternatives)
- Accessing Emergency interpreting assistance for the newcomers who don't speak the language of your community can be done through the telephone from commercial firms.
- Learning newcomers' names and finding out more about their country of origin
- Being patient, attentive, and respectful to the newcomers; some immigrants may have special needs that can affect their ability to settle into a new community quickly and easily.

**In Newfoundland, St. John's, the Association for New Canadians provides services that begin when a settlement counselor greets the newcomer at the airport with an interpreter and takes the newcomer to the Association's "Reception House."*

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

The Reception House is a temporary accommodation where a live-in coordinator welcomes newcomers and provides information and support.

More information can be accessed at http://www.anc-nf.cc/resettlement_assistance.html

It is important to keep in mind that there might be urgent situations in newcomers' families such as:

- Medical / health needs
- Family issues
- Lack of income

When immigrants arrive they receive the orientation book called “Welcome to Canada: What You Should Know” written in multiple languages which can be found at <http://an-top.com/Documents/Welcome%20to%20Canada%20-%20What%20you%20should%20know.pdf>

The book introduces the new arrivals about the community and provides information of programs and services that are available. Immigrants also benefit from having one visible, consistent point person or office to organize, distribute, and access information on the matter of settlement; they also benefit from having a reliable “friendly face” or phone number that appropriate information can be accessed prior to, at, and after arrival.

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

Some newcomers come from traditional and faith-oriented societies. A hospitable community will be sensitive to the fact and prepared to allow newcomers to practice their beliefs by:

- Ensuring newcomers know about the existence of a compatible group in the community
- Making a directory of places of worship and introductions to the members

CONCLUSION

It is important to remember that immigration is about people. If the primary goal is to increase the number of immigrants in communities then the key to achieving that is in creating and maintaining a welcoming place where people will want to live, work, and play.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Understand the current immigration environment and recognize that rural immigration is essential for strong Canada
- With all levels of governments, stakeholders, including private businesses, provincially and regionally, promote the rural areas around the world
- Prepare a public education campaign that
 - educates the local population about the value immigrants bring to the communities and generate new jobs, and
 - highlights the fact that immigrants contribute to the development, richness and beauty of this country
- Invite libraries to participate in attracting and retaining processes as essential information providers to the communities
- Provide mentorship programs for new Canadians to know the workplace culture of Canada
- Buy from immigrants
- Employ immigrants

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

- Create a system of validating credentials
- Send certificates or letters congratulating newcomers of becoming landed immigrants or Canadian citizens
- Create support programs for immigrant females to learn more about social freedoms
- Target immigrants who want to live in rural centers and look at who is coming and who is staying when building strategies
- Be prepared to compete globally for skilled workers
- Use universities and colleges to attract well-educated workforce to stay in Canada
- Help immigrants integrate successfully into Canadian society by providing social, educational, cultural, and economic support services and by involving them into sports teams, recreation activities, book clubs/societies

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF NEW CANADIANS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

- Offer a tax clinic, volunteer placement, information and referral, advocacy, settlement services, employment services, food, clothing, and crisis assistance
- Offer cultural activities, ESL classes and programs for youth and seniors skills training such as parenting, leadership, computer use, sewing

WORK CITED

“A toolbox of ideas for smaller centres.” 2nd edition. 2007 Prepared by the National Working Group on Small Centre Strategies Online Posting. Accessed: 24 Nov. 2008

<http://www.icavictoria.org/toolbox/EN_Toolbox.pdf>

“Canada - Attracting immigrants to smaller communities.” 04 February 2008 Online Posting. Accessed: 23 Nov. 2008

<http://www.workpermit.com/news/2008-02_03/canada/attracting-immigrants-smaller-communities.htm>

“Creating the Capacity to Welcome and Integrate Newcomers in Canada’s Small Cities.” Online Posting. Accessed: 2 Dec. 2008

<<http://www.chamber.ca/cmslib/general/40Newcomers.pdf>>

“Canadian Rural Partnership From the Rural Routes of ATLANTIC CANADA (Spring 2005). Our Communities ... Our Successes!” Online Posting. Accessed: 20 Dec. 2008

<<http://www.rural.gc.ca/team/newsletter/Spr05/ourcommunities.phtml#population>>

H. Akbari & Colin Sun “Immigrant Attraction and Retention: What Can Work and What is Being Done in Atlantic Canada?” Online Posting. Accessed: 4 Jan. 2009

<http://canada.metropolis.net/pdfs/ODC_Akbari_vol2_e.pdf>

“Welcoming and inclusive communities Toolkit.” Online Posting.
Accessed: 5 Dec. 2008

<http://www.auma.ca/live/digitalAssets/22/22218_WICT_booklet10232008.pdf>