

# Maximizing Settlement

**Discussion papers developed for  
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**Prepared for :  
National VSI Working Group I  
On Maximizing Settlement**

A collaboration of the Settlement Sector and Governments  
in association with the Voluntary Sector Initiative Project

*The summaries of opinions and interpretations expressed in the VSI working group discussion papers are those of the working group members, either individually or collectively, and do not necessarily reflect the views of CIC, nor do we guarantee the accuracy of the information provided.*



# Table of Contents

## Section 1

<b>Discussion Paper: Community Consultations</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Pre-Arrival Orientation .....	6
Post-Arrival Support.....	7
Job Readiness .....	8
Appendix.....	10

## Section 2

<b>Discussion Paper: Pre-Arrival Information</b> .....	<b>13</b>
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## Section 3

<b>Discussion Paper: Maximizing Settlement Policy to Facilitate Fuller Integration of Immigrants</b> .....	<b>17</b>
Canada's Innovation Strategy.....	17
National Innovation Strategy Policy Recommendation Priorities.....	18
Local Community Innovation .....	20
Funding Constraints to Innovation and Maximizing Settlement.....	20
Funding the Continuum of Settlement Services.....	22
Expediting Family Reunification.....	23
Comparable Programming to Enhance Smaller Centre Retention.....	23
Increasing the Effectiveness of Francophone Immigration .....	24
Appendix.....	25

## Section 4

<b>Project: National Network For LINC/ELSA/MIP-ESL Providers</b> .....	<b>29</b>
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## Section 1

# Discussion Paper: Community Consultations

This report presents preliminary findings from a series of focus-group consultations with 163 representatives from ten immigrant and refugee communities in Vancouver (Iranian, Colombian, Mexican, Venezuelan), Edmonton (Albanian Kosovar, Sierra Leonean, Kurdish), Regina (Afghan, Iraqi, Sudanese) and Toronto (Colombian). The consultations were undertaken in the spring of 2003 by members of the Maximizing Settlement Working Group in preparation for a workshop at the second National Settlement Conference. By engaging immigrants and refugees in a dialogue on settlement, the working group hoped to develop a rich and accurate description of the settlement and integration process. By bringing their perspectives to the public discourse on settlement, the working group hopes to help contribute to the integrity and sustainability of settlement practices.

The consultations were conducted in the preferred language of the participants by trained facilitators, recorded on audio tape and summarized in written English-language reports. In accordance with standard principles of ethical research, all participants were advised in their first language of the purpose of the consultation, assured that their responses would be confidential, and told that they would have the right to withdraw at any time. Each participant provided his or her informed consent to take part in the consultation.

A number of areas of concern emerged consistently from the consultations, including pre-arrival orientation, post-arrival support, and job-readiness. In this preliminary report, what the participants said about these areas is viewed through the lens of the conference theme: *building community through innovation, inclusion and partnership*. A more detailed discussion of the findings will form the basis of the Maximizing Settlement workshop at the conference.

Recommendations of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration (2003) that are supported by the research findings are listed in an Appendix to this document.

## Pre-Arrival Orientation

*“When reality hits, it is already too late. You wish you had made the efforts of finding information before coming to Canada. (Colombian – Toronto)”*

Most participants in the community consultations felt that the primary responsibility for pre-arrival orientation lies with individual immigrants, and they were eager to accept that responsibility. However, it was also clear that they required timely first-language access to relevant information about life in Canada. All participants in the Iraqi consultation, for example, agreed that “many things surprised them” when they arrived in Canada, that “nobody had informed them about [life in Canada] before arriving,” and that they had received “wrong answers” to their queries. The lack of orientation materials in Arabic, they felt, was the main reason behind this problem. A Kosovar participant noted, “We didn’t know how long we could go to school, and how to go about getting student finance support. We didn’t know on time the changes about our rights to bring somebody else to join family here, so we figured it out after the opportunity has been gone.” An Iranian continued, “I thought after I came to Canada that everything would be going okay for me. I could find a job and go to English class. But, I just got one month of English, and I was astonished about that. I thought the government would help us a lot. Now I get from government just \$500. That’s not enough for everything and I can’t continue my education.” Not a single participant was satisfied with the quality of pre-arrival orientation, self-directed or otherwise. Instead, the voice of recrimination was common.

That may have been recrimination born of regret. A number of participants expressed reservations about their decision to come to Canada, which appears in hindsight to have resulted from their lack of preparation. An Iranian participant stated, “If [you] have a good job, good life and everything is okay, please don’t come to Canada, because after you come here you will have so many troubles, so many problems—you can’t imagine!” In response to a question about whether the immigrants in any sense view Canada as a “prison,” a facilitator for the Vancouver Colombian group reported, “I think these women want to go back even if they have to start working again in their country, but they *cannot*. If they leave Canada, they cannot take their children with them because their children were born here.” An Iraqi participant cautioned, “Life in diaspora is painful and it is the same here. Life here is war.” Clearly this was not what he, or any of the others, had expected. “People come here thinking this will be heaven,” he noted.

The preliminary findings of this consultation suggest that it would be helpful and appropriate for immigrants to receive support to prepare themselves adequately for immigration; this would lessen the potential for regret. One innovation might be the enhancement of the Canadian Orientation Abroad Program, with a greater range and variety of orientation resources provided in the language of applicants and available on a cost-recoverable basis in digital or print format when the applicant applies for a visa. Orientation resource materials might be more useful if they were developed in consultation with permanent residents from source countries. Finally, partnerships between federal and provincial funders and agencies might make it easier for applicants to make direct contact with the settlement agencies and immigrant-serving organizations that are active in the regions where they plan to settle.

## Post-Arrival Support

*“I didn’t know anything. Most of the time I was lost. I didn’t know where to buy things I needed or anything about the transit system, streets or addresses but I didn’t want to cause any trouble because I was a refugee claimant. After three months I had learned some of the things I had to know but after three years here I am still afraid of many things.” (Iranian)*

Most participants reported that they had felt “acute loneliness” or a sense of “being abandoned” or “invisible” at various times during their settlement. As one of the Toronto participants commented, “Even the simplest aspects of one’s life” are problematical and can be highly idiosyncratic. For example, a Colombian participant in the Vancouver group cautioned, “At the beginning, you need to be very careful about the kind of people you relate with. Sometimes [people from your own country] take advantage of the people who just came.” This comment was the only one of its type in all of the consultations. In addition, some psychological and socio-cultural issues have profound effects on settlement. A facilitator for the Edmonton consultations reported, “There were many feelings which individuals wanted to work through. Participants were very aware of public perception and the fact that the community at large might feel they had no right to complain about their circumstances. However, this attitude did not negate the fact that individuals felt angry about their circumstances and ashamed at their position within society—particularly in relation to their previous status in their homelands.”

Providing the kinds of individual support that many newcomers require is obviously a labour-intensive undertaking. Nevertheless, participants in all consultations expressed a desire to take the lead in this process and suggested a wide variety of ways they could provide support. The Kosovar group explained, “We know exactly their needs and feelings, and by explaining carefully to them those ideas we will make their life easier.”

Participants repeatedly expressed their desire to be self-sufficient and to contribute actively to Canadian society, and stated that by working collaboratively they would be better able to assist each other with the cultural adjustments they faced. They saw the role of government in post-arrival orientation primarily as that of an agency that facilitates the development of community capacity. The participants said that it was a recurring challenge to find places to meet, and that government might help address this issue. Some groups were meeting at the offices of local immigrant-serving agencies, others found the cost of leasing building space too high or they had to compete with other groups for meeting space in community facilities. The Kosovar group suggested that the government should lease additional space, such as in a high-vacancy shopping mall, for the use of small ethno-cultural communities; they would find it a valuable asset for community development. The communities that used this space would be able to contribute to the costs of operating this space as they became more established and self-sufficient. The Afghan group noted that it would be very beneficial to help the community build an organized association. “Women should be given the opportunity to be part of the management in the association so they could convey women’s issues from the community,” they stated.

A number of participants indicated that they felt they were being “judged by Canadians” and that cultural differences sometimes “create distance between Canadians and newcomers.” One Iraqi participant stated that she did not know any Canadians, “so it would be nice if there were any kind of interaction between her and some Canadian families.” Another said that Canadians could help newcomers greatly simply by greeting them and asking about their welfare. Many viewed the culture gap as an opportunity to build bridges between communities. One Sudanese participant replied that a Canadian friend could help her to learn things, such as child-rearing practices, which are very different. “Some Canadians,” she reported, “don’t necessarily approve of the ways [Sudanese] are used to raising children . . . Canadian friends could be great help in solving these problems by teaching [us] child-rearing practices [that are customary] here in Canada. The role of government in supporting the Host Program was viewed by many as very important for newcomers, helping their transition to Canadian living.

Post-arrival orientation is clearly a complex and laborious undertaking with major consequences for newcomers. One innovation might be for settlement agencies that work with immigrant groups to develop a broader and more flexible range of services that would support newcomers with mental health needs, especially those who arrived under traumatic circumstances. Establishing pilot projects where immigrants and settlement agencies work together to develop appropriate and sustainable immigrant-led support organizations, might help to enhance inclusiveness. For example, the Sierra Leone group suggested developing a mentorship program within the ethno-cultural community. Partnership initiatives like one proposed by the Iraqi group to share responsibilities with service providers to help other newcomers take full advantage of public services—for example, helping them register for health coverage and social insurance cards—could benefit everybody.

## Job Readiness

*“We need work because we send money to our families back home. They are living under war. If we earn \$500 we send \$200 to our families and live on the rest of the money and pay taxes. We shouldn’t have to work only in cleaning job...there should be orientation or training to help us find work that can support us. The government should help us find work instead of placing us on social assistance.” (Sudanese)*

Employment and training issues were a great concern for all participants. As the Sudanese participant stated, nobody wanted to be trapped on social assistance. The Sierra Leone group spoke of the expectations of family members remaining in their homeland; the immigrants were expected to earn enough income for themselves and for the family left behind as well. However, all stressed that their current income was barely sufficient to meet their own physical and material needs, let alone the needs of their family back home. This has become such a source of humiliation and shame that many find it very difficult to return home.

Recognizing that some re-training might be necessary, most participants were distressed to find how little value seemed to be given to the skills they thought they possessed. A Mexican participant commented, “It doesn’t matter how much training you have in your country—we are very clear that we need to be training again. But why do we have to start from zero? It seems that everything you had before, you don’t have here any more.” All participants mentioned issues related to the recognition of academic and professional credentials. Each group in the Regina consultation referred to what they perceived as overly long and complicated processes for recognizing credentials and prior learning. According to the Toronto group, “For the international trained professional and tradesperson the process of obtaining accreditation and licensure is often loaded with barriers, little

or hard-to-obtain information, conflicting and complex processes, and—depending on the profession or trade and regulatory body or union that govern it— [it] may take many years before the individual immigrant is able to re-enter the profession or to obtain skilled employment.” These sorts of structural barriers lead to the proverbial Catch-22 situation where one needs Canadian experience to obtain work but is prevented by the system from obtaining it.

Many participants noted the fundamental role of language training for job readiness. An Afghan participant stated, “Expansion of the English-language program is essential, as well as the re-establishment of links to employment classes so we can use the skills that we brought with us from our home country. . . . LINC programs are inadequate to prepare us for employment.” (LINC: Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada.) It was clear that newcomers often have no access to the complex socio-linguistic knowledge that native speakers of English and French employ to develop resumes, complete applications, write letters of inquiry and meet potential employers. In fact, job-hunting itself as a concept is unknown in many source countries.

Preliminary findings indicate that these concerns must be addressed quickly. One innovation that seems timely and appropriate might be for the government to fund the development of language-training programs that focus on preparing newcomers for employment. Many participants stated that they would be interested in helping newcomers find work, as an inclusive community development activity. The Edmonton group suggested a new type of partnership arrangement be created to establish micro-enterprises in communities, undertaken by immigrant groups under the guidance of sponsoring agencies. Certainly a partnership between government and the private sector to develop credential assessment and licensure guidelines would go far toward the elimination of a major source of frustration.

| *Report prepared by Bill McMichael, co-chair of the Maximizing Settlement Working Group, with contributions from Yohannes Yirsaw and Maria Jagiello, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers; Getachew Woldeysus, Regina Open Door Society; and Martha Orellana, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants.*

## Appendix

The following recommendations from *Settlement and integration: a sense of belonging* are consistent with the preliminary research findings of described in this paper. The full committee report is available online from <http://www.parl.gc.ca>.

### Recommendation 1

Citizenship and Immigration Canada should expand and enhance the Canadian Orientation Abroad Program and make it available to all classes of immigrants.

### Recommendation 2

Citizenship and Immigration Canada should develop a program that would facilitate the exchange of information between visa officers overseas and settlement workers in Canada. The program should ensure that visa officers are aware of the settlement challenges in particular regions of the country and should provide information that will assist settlement agencies in planning for their future clients' needs.

### Recommendation 3

Visa officers and provincial representatives overseas should provide information to successful applicants for permanent residence so that the newcomers can contact settlement agencies and other organizations that assist immigrants in the regions in which they intend to settle. Provinces who do not have representatives overseas should be encouraged to promote themselves in this manner.

### Recommendation 10

As a pilot project, Citizenship and Immigration Canada should contract with selected established settlement agencies to provide settlement and integration services, specifying the final outcomes and allowing the agencies significant flexibility in determining how to best serve their clientele. The results should be monitored to determine if there is an improvement in end results with less ongoing CIC administrative oversight, while maintaining overall financial accountability.

### Recommendation 11

There should be greater flexibility in determining the length of time individuals are eligible for particular settlement services, with the determination of eligibility being primarily guided by the client needs assessment done by the service provider organization.

### Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that refugee claimants be eligible for settlement services that will enable them to better support themselves while awaiting determination of their claims.

### Recommendation 14

Citizenship and Immigration Canada should ensure that higher levels of language instruction for newcomers are available throughout the country and should work towards implementing national standards.

### Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that LINC funding be provided for language training programs that are specifically geared towards finding employment.

### Recommendation 16

The federal-provincial-territorial working group established to address the recognition of foreign credentials should move as quickly as possible in this endeavour.

**Recommendation 17**

The Committee recommends that Citizenship and Immigration Canada immediately establish an office to facilitate professional and trade assessments and accreditation for immigrants.

**Recommendation 18**

The Government of Canada should provide greater support and assistance to foreign-trained workers through loan and internship programs, as well as other means.

**Recommendation 19**

Settlement programming and client needs assessments should be sensitive to mental health issues and, in particular, the needs of refugees and other newcomers with stress-related disorders.

**Recommendation 20**

Citizenship and Immigration Canada must ensure that the Interim Federal Health Program addresses the mental health needs of those fleeing persecution or who are otherwise forced to leave their home country.

**Recommendation 21**

Funding should be provided to train local mental health professionals in the treatment of mental health issues that arise from the immigration and refugee experience, including post-traumatic stress disorder. Cultural sensitivity should be included as a component of this training.

**Recommendation 24**

Citizenship and Immigration Canada should facilitate the active involvement of members of the local community in the settlement and integration process.

**Recommendation 26**

The Committee recommends that Citizenship and Immigration Canada encourage settlement agencies to develop or augment programs directed at immigrant children and their families, and provide the necessary funding to do so.

**Recommendation 27**

Citizenship and Immigration Canada should work with service providers to develop settlement models that address the needs of newcomers from the initial assessment stage to full integration in Canadian society and the acquisition of citizenship.



## Section 2

### Discussion Paper: Pre-Arrival Information

Canada is proud to be a country of multiculturalism and diversity, a result of its successful integration of immigrants from all parts of the world. These people have chosen Canada as their home to make a better and brighter future for themselves and their children. However, before they came, many were unaware of the real sacrifices they would have to make in order to survive in this land of opportunity.

The majority of the people who can afford to emigrate and are qualified to come to Canada are well educated and well settled professionals who believe they will improve their standard of living in their new home. Most foreigners believe that jobs in their related fields will be waiting for them in Canada—after all, why else come to Canada? However, when they get here, they find nothing of the sort: the only opportunities available to many of them are in manual labour.

Vijay Kapur is a highly qualified professional engineer, who applied for immigration in response to Canadian government appeals in local newspapers for highly educated individuals. In the lengthy immigration process, Vijay met all the requirements—age, financial and, most importantly, educational—and assumed that the emphasis on education meant that there were jobs available for people like him. Why else would it be a must for immigration purposes?

Like most people, Vijay came to Canada with certain expectations, visions and dreams of his new life. He had high hopes; he believed that he would be able to settle down in Canada with his family and that he would make more money. He soon found that this was not the case at all. Vijay spent months searching for employment in his related field, but he was not taken seriously because he did not have a Canadian degree or experience. His main concern was how to get experience in Canada if no one would hire him. His only option was to work in a factory doing hard labour or janitorial work. He wondered what dignity was left for a professional engineer who had to clean toilets for a living. He says, “I believe I have failed myself in life and I have no choice but to be a janitor in order to feed myself. If I had stayed in India at least I would have had a good career and my personal dignity.”

Immigrants who try to take advantage of the Canadian employment system typically find their way frustrated by barriers, including inadequate recognition of their foreign credentials, lack of Canadian experience and limited English language skills. The government of Canada may have changed the immigration policy to encourage highly educated and skilled workers, but this change failed to take into account employment practices in the industry, commerce and service sectors. As a result, many highly trained immigrants have been unable to find gainful employment in their profession. With their dreams of a successful career in Canada shattered, many have become depressed and disappointed.

Dr. David L. E. Watt, Principal Investigator and Associate Professor at the University of Calgary, has conducted a study, *Benchmarking Adult Rates of Second Language Acquisition and Integration: How long and how fast?*<sup>1</sup> Almost two thirds of the participants in this study of students in the LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) programs of various institutions across Calgary had a previous employment category of a professional nature. Engineers comprised the largest group, at 22 percent. Of the population who were employed, 75 percent were employed as cleaners. Two thirds of the immigrant population came to Canada as highly educated professionals, and three quarters of them ended up working in menial jobs. This study confirms the fact that Canada is recruiting highly educated professionals, giving them a false sense of hope that their educational qualifications are important to the Canadian government, when in fact there is no program in place to help them get recognition for their foreign credentials or to help them integrate and get employment in Canada. Canada is depriving other countries of highly educated professionals, and at the same time causing mental and emotional stress for new immigrants.

We highly recommend that certification of profession be streamlined and simplified. Canada is depriving other countries of their highly educated professionals, but we are not utilizing the education or experience of these individuals. It is a sad truth that Canada has the most highly educated janitorial staff in the world. Is it really necessary for us to collect highly educated professionals from around the world just to form a highly educated group of janitors in our country?

While conceding that “primary responsibility for pre-arrival orientation lies with the individual immigrant,” the *Primary Findings from Community Consultations Report* goes on to say that “timely first-language access to relevant information about life in Canada” is required. Immigrants must know the truth about this situation before they decide to come here. They should be able to consult foreign embassies, the Internet, the media and all other pathways to learn what steps they will need to take in order to practice their profession here. Immigrants should be aware of credential assessment and how to go about establishing equivalencies for these credentials within the Canadian system. They must also know about the professional licensing required for them to be able to enter a regulated profession, such as nursing or engineering. They should be engaged in this integration process before they come to Canada. If they are aware of all the requirements needed to practice their profession, they can initiate credential assessment as well as begin second-language training. This process could continue, with the fulfillment of other occupational requirements, when they arrive in Canada.

The government and employers in the private sector are out of sync. They need to work together to help immigrants integrate more quickly into the workforce. An example of such cooperation is the Provincial Nominees Program. Nine provinces and territories have signed onto this project, which allows them to select immigrants according to their needs and interests. The community commits itself to assisting immigrants during settlement, sometimes by having a job ready for them. Individuals who have been successful in securing such assistance contact the provincial government, which then evaluates the request and submits the names to Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

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There is a double standard of accepting qualifications from different countries. For instance, British Columbia recruited medical practitioners from South Africa to practice in rural areas. Not only did the provincial government accept their qualifications, it also provided them with financial assistance to relocate. On the other hand, the Canadian government does not recognize medical colleges in India and Pakistan. These colleges, established by the British government more than a century ago, are run by the same standards of education as any medical institute in Great Britain. Presently, the qualifications of physicians educated at King Edward Medical College in Lahore, Pakistan, are fully accepted in England. It is disappointing that Canada fails to recognize the qualifications of individuals from these and other countries.

The government needs to develop consistent standards of foreign qualifications assessment with employers and with the regulating and licensing bodies. This process should be allowed to begin overseas. A single source of information should be set up and norms should be established for work experience.

An excellent example of how government can cooperate with employers is “The Credentials Recognition Program,”<sup>2</sup> run by Manitoba’s Ministry of Labour and Immigration. This program helps immigrants gain experience in their field by offering wage assistance, counselling and referral services. The province pays 40 percent of the gross wage per employee for six months if the position continues beyond the initial period.

Canada’s continued success in attracting and keeping skilled immigrants depends on the rapid and effective integration of these immigrants into the workforce. We need to recognize the credentials of immigrants and match them with the corresponding Canadian credentials. An example of such matching is the Foreign Trained Engineer Pilot Project in British Columbia. This program allows immigrant engineers to write licensing exams shortly after they have arrived. It also helps these foreign trained engineers to acquire the work experience needed to qualify for a professional license. Canadian work experience helps immigrants to better understand the workplace environment as well as the expectations of employers. Encouraging immigrants to partake in internships helps them acquire the experience and the confidence needed to better integrate into the Canadian workforce.

#### Recommendations:

- Truth in advertising for foreigners applying for immigration to Canada;
- Recognition of foreign credentials;
- Standards and consistency developed across all countries;
- Helping potential immigrants obtain information about professional license requirements before they immigrate to Canada;
- Forming a parallel between government and employers in the private sector so they can work together to help immigrants integrate into the workforce; and
- All parties involved (government, employers, immigrant-serving agencies, regulatory and licensing bodies) need to work together to help make changes to the system and ease the integration of new immigrants into Canada.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on The Credentials Recognition Program visit: [http://www.ocolclo.gc.ca/archives/sst\\_es/2002/obstacle/obstacle\\_e.htm](http://www.ocolclo.gc.ca/archives/sst_es/2002/obstacle/obstacle_e.htm)

Similar findings are noted in the Maximizing Settlement Working Group's report, *Preliminary Findings from Community Consultations*, and in the June 2003 report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, *Settlement and Integration: A Sense of Belonging*. Both papers identify the need for a more comprehensive pre-arrival orientation and recommend expanding the Canadian Orientation Abroad Program as one potential solution. Furthermore, the two reports are consistent with those of this paper in recommending the uniform implementation of standards for the recognition of foreign credentials across the country.

An easy and effective change would be to distribute pamphlets listing the Web sites of professional regulating bodies, immigrant-serving agencies and educational institutions in Canada. Prospective immigrants could tap into them for information about licensing requirements in particular professions. Candidates could use the one to three years when their visa is being processed to explore the likelihood that their qualifications would be accepted, and they could satisfy some of the further educational requirements by the licensing bodies. In this way, our government could help prospective immigrants look realistically at their profession so that they face no surprises after they land in Canada.

| Research conducted by M. Salim Sindhu, Calgary Immigrant Educational Society

## Section 3

# Discussion Paper: Maximizing Settlement Policy to Facilitate Fuller Integration of Immigrants

This paper discusses policy initiatives to maximize settlement in Canada. Canada's Innovation Strategy proposes certain ways in which immigration policy can make it easier to integrate immigrants by recognizing their skills and training in the Canadian labour market. Such a streamlined national framework would overcome jurisdictional and institutional barriers, and create an environment more conducive to integration. The Innovation Strategy suggests that government set the overall framework, facilitate the multi-stakeholder dialogues, and provide funding for innovation, but that local communities should develop innovation on their own. After all, settlement services within Canada are delivered primarily by community-based, not-for-profit immigrant-serving agencies. The work of these agencies is conducted within the constraints of increasingly complex funding structures. This paper examines the ways in which constraints posed by the terms and conditions of funding limit how immigrant-serving agencies can innovate, fulfil their mission and provide all the continuum of settlement services needed to meet the needs of immigrants and to maximize settlement. This paper also recommends policy changes that could result in the consistent provision of comparable services across the country. We believe that these changes could help smaller centres and all regions benefit from immigration, and could help more Francophones immigrate successfully.

### Canada's Innovation Strategy

The demographic challenges to Canada's increasing need for a highly educated and skilled labour force to fuel the growing knowledge-based economy include a shrinking domestic labour force, the result of a low birth rate and an aging population. In fact, so crucial are immigrants to Canada's ability to increase our labour force to meet labour market demand that immigrants will account for all net labour force growth in Canada by 2011 and for all net population growth by 2031.<sup>3</sup>

To successfully recruit highly educated and skilled immigrants from an increasingly competitive global market, and to fully benefit from their skills, Canada will first have to improve our integration of immigrants into the Canadian labour market. Despite higher average levels of education than their Canadian peers, recent immigrants have experienced a growing disparity in both employment rates and earning levels compared to their Canadian peers.<sup>4</sup> Increasing the level of immigration and the

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<sup>3</sup>Denton, Feaver and Spencer, Applied Research Branch Human Resources Development Canada, *Immigration, Labour Force and the Age Structure of the Population*, 1999. Cited in Government of Canada, *Knowledge Matters Skills and Learning for Canadians*, Human Resources Development Canada, 2002.

<sup>4</sup>Statistics Canada, *Canadian Labour Force Survey 2000-2001*; Citizenship and Immigration Canada, *Facts and Figures*, 2000.

\* In Statistics Canada, *Census of Canada, 1996* cited in Government of Canada, *Knowledge Matters Skills and Learning For Canadians*, Human Resources Development Canada, 2002 – It can take up to 10 years for the earnings of university-educated immigrants to catch up to those of their Canadian counterparts. In 1996 there was a nearly 20 percent difference between the employment rate of university-educated, Canadian born workers (92 percent) and that of university educated immigrants (73 percent). Cited in Government of Canada, *Knowledge Matters Skills and Learning for Canadians*, Human Resources Development Canada, 2002.

efficient labour market integration of immigrants' skills is central to the success of **Canada's Innovation Strategy**.

**Knowledge Matters** proposes the following key determinants for the successful integration of immigrants:

- Labour market language fluency;
- Higher levels of education;
- Prior work or study in Canada;
- Recognition of foreign qualifications;
- Canadian work experience; and
- Public and employer attitudes.

By considering these key determinants, many of the recommendations in **Canada's Innovation Strategy** propose the creation of an environment more conducive to maximizing settlement and achieving a higher level of integration for immigrants. **Knowledge Matters** recommends attracting highly skilled immigrants, providing higher levels of language training, and streamlining processes for effective assessment and recognition of skills and prior learning (before and after arrival). A number of factors would help in the integration of marginalized workers, both Canadian-born and immigrants. These include increased mobility through interprovincial assessment and recognition of informal skills; integrated bridging programs; and increased literacy and lifelong learning, with multiple access points and increased resources for training (including part-time training).

## **National Innovation Strategy Policy Recommendation Priorities**

To consider which of the recommendations of Canada's Innovation Strategy should be carried out first, the **National Summit on Innovation and Learning** brought together many Innovation Strategy stakeholders in November 2002. Since then they have been trying to formulate strategies to break down the silos of governmental jurisdictions to work with private sector employers, NGOs and educational institutions for more effective immigration, skills assessment and training policies. They have recommended means of overcoming jurisdictional barriers and streamlining the settlement and integration process. Many points of their action plan will benefit settlement, including the development of a learning culture with expanded post-secondary capacity. The development of an assessment-based strategy that potential immigrants could use at many stages of the process will facilitate proper assessment of their skills. They could then integrate more easily into appropriate employment or find out what further education they require.

Among the top three priority recommendations for **building an inclusive and skilled workforce** were:

#### **Recommendation 1:**

##### **Increase the participation levels of under-employed groups (including women, youth, people with disabilities, visible minorities and Aboriginal people):**

- Encourage use of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) via occupation-based collaborative projects including non-formal and informal learning and skills;
- Improve access to training, apprenticeship and post-secondary internship programs for the target groups; and
- Implement job entry and job re-entry skills development, local community based one-stop-shopping approach to increase participation, career development and life skills and employment preparation programs.

#### **Recommendation 3:**

##### **Undertake a comprehensive plan to improve the process for recognizing foreign credentials (begin overseas, coordinate credential evaluation processes, establish a single source of information on licensing requirements; establish norms for work experience; develop resources for employers.)**

Proposed implementation Strategies:

- Prior to arrival: establishing pre-settlement one-stop-shopping (Web sites and kiosks) with information on recognition of foreign credentials;
- Combine efforts of government regulatory bodies, colleges and universities to define and communicate licensing requirements and upgrading; and
- Establish strong federal involvement (in cooperation with provinces/territories and stakeholders) in foreign credential recognition through the establishment of a mechanism to develop national standards for foreign credential recognition.<sup>5</sup>

The Government of Canada's Early Actions and Announcements on the implementation of the Innovation Strategy included commitments to:

- speed up the implementation time frame from 2010 to 2005;
- fast-track skilled workers with job offers;
- work with partners to eliminate barriers to recognition of foreign credentials; and
- recruit skilled workers.

National coordination of credential evaluation processes and apprenticeship requirements will make the accreditation process more accessible, more transparent, more timely and will give immigrants a chance to participate in the Canadian labour market more quickly. Higher levels of language training, occupation-specific language training, and incentives for employers to provide internships, work experience and workplace training will help to overcome the barriers of workplace language skills and the lack of Canadian work experience. These actions will also help to bridge existing barriers and speed up the process of assessing and recognizing the skills and training of immigrants.

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<sup>5</sup>The Government of Canada with the Conference Board of Canada, *National Summit on Innovation and Learning Summary*, Industry Canada and Human Resources Canada, 2002

A coordinated effort involving all levels of government plus the private, academic and voluntary sectors can establish a framework to enhance local capacity and the development of community innovation across the country.

## Local Community Innovation

The **National Summit on Innovation and Learning** recognizes the need for communities to build sustainable partnerships and to design innovation appropriate to their local conditions. Minister Stewart has stressed the role of the voluntary sector in providing leadership and solutions for innovation and learning. Grant Trump, President and CEO of the Canadian Council of Human Resources, has stressed that increased funding must find its way to organizations that deliver services. The discussions on strengthening communities recommended seed funding for community-initiated activities and local level initiatives to welcome new immigrants and to facilitate their integration.

Immigrant-serving organizations are the key agencies working with immigrants and local communities to facilitate settlement and integration. These organizations require flexibility of financial resources in order to participate in policy discussions, to build meaningful partnerships with strategic stakeholders, and to fully utilize their potential to tailor design innovation appropriate to local environments.

## Funding Constraints to Innovation and Maximizing Settlement

Innovation strategy emphasizes that communities must be empowered and not restricted in how they mobilize themselves to advance local innovations. Unfortunately, immigrant-serving agencies work within an increasingly complex funding environment. Inadequate funding, short-term funding, a patchwork of program funding, lack of flexibility in funding and unequal power relations,<sup>6</sup> complex multiple funder reporting, and multiple accountability requirements constrain the ability of organizations to innovate and to maintain holistic programming to meet the integration needs of immigrants.

Through contribution agreements with government, immigrant-serving agencies (as designated “service providing organizations”) get funds every year to deliver specific settlement services to specific groups of eligible immigrants who have settled in their community. However, while the demand for their services has increased, funding levels have decreased. The funding levels in contribution agreements are often established without accounting for increased delivery costs. Organizations are not fully reimbursed for their core infrastructure costs and are expected to contribute “in kind.” While they must find the resources to design programs, build partnerships, write proposals and negotiate funding, they do not receive core funding and face strict project limitations on eligible budget items.

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<sup>6</sup> Canadian Council For Refugees, *Best Settlement Practices Settlement Services For Refugees and Immigrants in Canada*, February 1998, p 22.

Organizations are not funded to provide a continuum of settlement services; instead, they receive funding designated for short-term projects to meet specific targets. Increasingly inflexible, targeted short-term funding does not allow them to move funds within budgets and keeps them from responding to changing needs within the community. Increased project monitoring concentrates on project expenditures, examining how strictly the organizations have adhered to line items and not focusing on project outcomes or program evaluation. There is no recognition of the fact that agencies must do more than satisfy multiple funders—that they are also accountable to their clients, their boards, their partners and their communities.

Lack of multi-year funding challenges long-term planning and increases the administrative time required to prepare proposals, negotiate contribution agreements, close out agreements and recommence the cycle.

This is further complicated for organizations by their need to diversify funding so that they can provide all the programming their clients need. But while they spend inordinate amounts of time administering increasingly intricate funding and reporting structures, core infrastructure costs are deemed ineligible as project expenditures.

Funders now often require projects to be co-funded and linked to partnerships. To apply for even a short-term project, organizations must initiate partnerships; prepare separate but interdependent proposals and budgets meeting the guidelines, budgetary formats and reporting structures of each funder; make requested revisions; and re-submit applications. It is often difficult to deliver, complete and evaluate projects effectively within limited timelines. Even after applications are submitted and contribution agreements are signed, delays can hold back start-up, hiring of staff, participant intake, etc. These delays leave organizations, staff and clients and programming in a “hurry up and wait” mode for extended periods of time. Projects requiring multiple funders are particularly vulnerable; refusal or withdrawal of one funding source threatens the entire chain of interdependent funding.

The limited terms, conditions and volatile nature of increasingly targeted short-term project funding thwart the efforts of service organizations to plan and deliver innovative, integrated settlement programs. In fact, immigrant-serving agencies do much more in the community than simply deliver services. They are the key link between immigrants and the external environment, consisting of institutions, government policy and public opinion. As such, these agencies have a crucial role to play in the implementation of the Innovation Strategy at the local level.

The Canadian Council for Refugees has spelled out the valuable role of settlement agencies:

- They have helped to build, support and empower Canadian ethno-cultural communities, and continue to work in partnership with communities.
- They offer education, liaison, expertise and support to mainstream agencies, governments, business and community organizations.
- They work in partnership with mainstream institutions, providing complementary expertise and resources so that appropriate services and programs can be offered to newcomers.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Canadian Council for Refugees, *Best Settlement Practices Settlement Services For Refugees and Immigrants in Canada*, February 1998, p 21.

## Funding the Continuum of Settlement Services

Within increasing limitations of the current project funding structures, immigrant-serving agencies have experienced increasing constraints to the maintenance of the infrastructure and funding required to deliver the continuum of settlement programming to facilitate the settlement and full integration of immigrants in local communities. The continuum of settlement services includes:

- meeting the immediate needs of newly arrived immigrants;
- basic and higher levels of English or French language training;
- childcare;
- information and referral;
- counselling;
- orientation to Canada and the local community;
- social supports;
- support for extended families and children;
- access to further training;
- access to Canadian work experience;
- employment preparation;
- a range of social and cultural supports;
- family reunification;
- public education;
- anti-racism work; and
- community building.

Maximizing settlement with effective settlement services requires the smooth delivery of all these functions. The full integration of immigrants in Canadian labour markets, with the optimum utilization of their skills, would require the full synchronization of all services—from overseas information and orientation, to timely processing, to integrated government funding at all levels, to the delivery of settlement services and the encouragement of community innovation. With more flexibility in funding and seed funding, local immigrant-serving agencies can develop meaningful partnerships to design and implement community innovation to provide appropriate training, supports and a range of programs, services and networks to maximize settlement and full integration in their communities.

### **Recommendation:**

We strongly recommend that stable longer term funding with streamlined accountability and reporting process be secured to provide for the continuum of settlement services.

## **Expediting Family Reunification**

Our clients demand the reunification of families as a key indicator of whether immigrants have integrated successfully. Many newcomers are separated from their families, even from minor children and spouses, when they immigrate to Canada. Our clients often struggle for years to be reunited with their families. The long delays in family reunification are demoralizing and delay settlement and full integration. Expedited family reunification processes would greatly enhance the full integration of immigrants.

### **Recommendation:**

Family reunification processes should be expedited to enhance the full integration of immigrants.

## **Comparable Programming to Enhance Smaller Centre Retention**

Smaller centres have an especially hard time attracting and retaining immigrants. To counteract this situation, it will be necessary to allocate sufficient funding for smaller communities to provide the same services and programming as larger centres, such as LINC or CLIC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada and Cours de langue pour les immigrants au Canada) funding and language training linked to employment preparation. At present, there are vast discrepancies in the services and the level of language training available across the country, ranging from Level 3 in some areas to Level 8 and above in others. Immigrants who require advanced language training are often discouraged by these inequities from remaining in small centres. With increased funding to underwrite settlement, higher level language training and language training linked to employment, a whole cluster of newcomers are bridged into upper-end jobs and further training in the labour market. These services would aid the successful integration of newcomers and increase the number of those who choose to stay in smaller centers.

### **Recommendation:**

We strongly recommend that funding be provided for comparable levels of programming in smaller centres; for upper level language training, employment preparation and Canadian work placements.

## Increasing Effective Francophone Immigration

The staff of immigrant-serving agencies have diverse linguistic capabilities. If organizations routinely designated to provide services in both official languages were provided with additional funding for French language training for existing staff, and for partnership building with Francophone minority groups, they would be in a better position to deliver settlement services effectively in French.

### **Recommendation:**

We recommend that CIC provide additional funding to those immigrant serving agencies designated to provide services in both official languages. Additional funding would enable these agencies to enhance their capacity in French and to build partnerships with minority Francophone communities to enhance their capacity to deliver settlement services in French.

In summary, we applaud the National Innovation Strategy Policy Recommendation Priorities as a powerful force in overcoming jurisdictional and institutional barriers to create an environment more conducive to the integration of immigrants. More resources are needed in order to distribute the benefits of immigration across the country, to help smaller centres attract and retain newcomers and to increase Francophone immigration. These resources would allow smaller centres across the country to offer comparable programming for language training, employment preparation and Canadian workplace training as are available in larger centres. In addition, expedited family reunification would help newcomers integrate fully into Canadian life.

The maximization of settlement and integration requires the revamping of existing funding structures for immigrant-serving organizations. Funding should no longer be project-based, but should become a more stable, integrated, longer term and streamlined structure that takes the continuum of settlement services into account. Organizations require flexible financial resources if they are to design and implement community innovation to provide the programs and services that will maximize settlement and full integration. More flexible funding would allow immigrant-serving agencies to be more involved in innovation strategy. They could participate in policy discussions, build meaningful partnerships with strategic stakeholders and thoroughly design and implement community innovation while fulfilling their mission to achieve a higher level of integration of immigrants.

| *Report prepared by Lisa Bamford (Multicultural Association of Fredericton, Fredericton NB)*

## Appendix

**Recommendations from Standing Committee on Settlement and Integration: a sense of belonging** concurring with the priorities and initiatives established at the **National Summit on Innovation and Learning** to increase immigration, provide information overseas, overcome barriers to full implementation of immigrant skills and training in the Canadian labour market.

### Recommendation 1

Citizenship and Immigration Canada should expand and enhance the Canadian Orientation Abroad Program and make it available to all classes of immigrants.

### Recommendation 2

Citizenship and Immigration Canada should develop a program that would facilitate the exchange of information between visa officers overseas and settlement workers in Canada. The program should ensure that visa officers are aware of the settlement challenges in particular regions of the country and should provide information that will assist settlement agencies in planning for their future clients' needs.

### Recommendation 3

Visa officers and provincial representatives overseas should provide information to successful applicants for permanent residence so that the newcomers can contact settlement agencies and other organizations that assist immigrants in the regions in which they intend to settle. Provinces who do not have representatives overseas should be encouraged to promote themselves in this manner.

### Recommendation 16

The federal-provincial-territorial working group established to address the recognition of foreign credentials should move as quickly as possible in this endeavor.

### Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that Citizenship and Immigration Canada immediately establish an office to facilitate professional and trade assessments and accreditation for immigrants.

### Recommendation 18

The Government of Canada should provide greater support and assistance to foreign-trained workers through loan and internship programs, as well as other means.

### Recommendation 24

Citizenship and Immigration Canada should facilitate the active involvement of members of the local community in the settlement and integration process.

**Recommendations from Standing Committee on Settlement and Integration: a sense of belonging** addressing the need to modify Canada's current funding structure to allow immigrant serving organizations maximum flexibility to innovate and to provide the continuum of settlement services to meet the needs of new immigrants.

### Recommendation 4

To address gaps in service, Citizenship and Immigration Canada should develop a better coordination strategy for the various federal and provincial departments involved in the

provision of settlement services. Provinces without a settlement agreement with the federal government should be encouraged to pursue such an arrangement.

#### **Recommendation 5**

Overall funding for settlement programs should be augmented to reflect the increase in immigrant arrivals with a benchmark of \$3,000 per newcomer being dedicated to settlement services.

#### **Recommendation 6**

Citizenship and Immigration Canada should participate in discussions with service provider organizations and the provinces to ascertain the most appropriate funding models for settlement services. In reviewing national funding formulae, Citizenship and Immigration Canada should consider a per capita model that would ensure that basic settlement services are available in all regions.

#### **Recommendation 7**

The funding of settlement services should be flexible enough to account for the needs of regions of low immigration and should ensure that the core operating costs for settlement agencies are addressed.

#### **Recommendation 8**

Citizenship and Immigration Canada should work towards multi-year funding agreements that provide stability to service providers and allow them to engage in long-term planning.

#### **Recommendation 9**

Citizenship and Immigration Canada must ensure that funds transferred to the provinces for settlement purposes are spent on specified settlement programs and that reporting requirements are in place to ensure that funds are not diverted to other provincial programs.

#### **Recommendation 10**

As a pilot project, Citizenship and Immigration Canada should contract with selected established settlement agencies to provide settlement and integration services, specifying the final outcomes and allowing the agencies significant flexibility in determining how to best serve their clientele. The results should be monitored to determine if there is an improvement in end results with less ongoing CIC administrative oversight, while maintaining overall financial accountability.

#### **Recommendation 14**

Citizenship and Immigration Canada should ensure that higher levels of language instruction for newcomers are available throughout the country and should work towards implementing national standards.

#### **Recommendation 15**

The Committee recommends that LINC funding be provided for language training programs that are specifically geared towards finding employment.

#### **Recommendation 19**

Settlement programming and client needs assessments should be sensitive to mental health issues and, in particular, the needs of refugees and other newcomers with stress-related disorders.

#### **Recommendation 20**

Citizenship and Immigration Canada must ensure that the Interim Federal Health Program addresses the mental health needs of those fleeing persecution or who are otherwise forced to leave their home country.

**Recommendation 21**

Funding should be provided to train local mental health professionals in the treatment of mental health issues that arise from the immigration and refugee experience, including post-traumatic stress disorder. Cultural sensitivity should be included as a component of this training.

**Recommendation 22**

To combat racism and xenophobia, and to promote inclusiveness and a sense of belonging, the federal government should launch a public education campaign to provide information about immigrants and refugees and their economic, social and cultural contributions to Canada. The federal government should also monitor hate crimes and prosecutions in Canada and report the findings to Parliament.

**Recommendation 26**

The Committee recommends that Citizenship and Immigration Canada encourage settlement agencies to develop or augment programs directed at immigrant children and their families, and provide the necessary funding to do so.

**Recommendation 27**

Citizenship and Immigration Canada should work with service providers to develop settlement models that address the needs of newcomers from the initial assessment stage to full integration in Canadian society and the acquisition of citizenship.

**Recommendation 28**

Citizenship and Immigration Canada should conduct a review of salary and compensation packages in the settlement sector to ensure competitiveness with comparable positions in the labour market.

**Recommendations from Standing Committee on Settlement and Integration: a sense of belonging** addressing smaller centre destination and retention and increasing the effectiveness of Francophone immigration:

**Recommendation 23**

The Government of Canada should examine further incentives to encourage immigrants to settle in areas of low immigration, such as:

- Waiving or refunding the Right of Landing Fee for immigrants who settle in these regions;
- The use of tax credits; and
- Loan programs.

**Recommendation 25**

Citizenship and Immigration Canada should provide greater resources specifically designed to ensure that settlement services are available in the French language in areas that have been identified as having an immigrant Francophone minority.



## Section 4

### **Project: National Network For Linc/Elsa/Miip-Esl Providers**

*Project manager Brenda Lohrenz at [eslnewcomernet@telus.net](mailto:eslnewcomernet@telus.net)*

This initiative was a joint effort by TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) Canada and the National Settlement Conference's Maximizing Settlement Working Group funded through the federal Voluntary Sector Initiative. The National Network for LINC/ELSA/MIIP-ESL Providers promotes information access and sharing among immigrant English-language providers with programs administered both federally (LINC: Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) and provincially (BC's ELSA Program: English Language Services for Adults, and Manitoba's MIIP-ESL Program: Manitoba Immigrant Integration Program-ESL).

The objectives that follow were originally informed by a 2002 Regina TESL Canada Conference session held to gather feedback for a proposed national network of adult newcomer ESL providers:

- Increased opportunities for LINC/ELSA/MIIP-ESL providers across Canada to share information relating to resources, research, and best practices;
- Identification of priority items for settlement language providers nationally to better inform policy and decision-makers and to provide an informed focus at national gatherings (such as the National Settlement and TESL Canada Conferences);
- A centralized location (i.e., Web site) to go to for information on LINC/ELSA/MIIP-ESL initiatives, research, and resources.

Outputs for this project:

- Updates in the form of three newsletters distributed to LINC/ELSA/MIIP-ESL providers across the country. Newsletter content has included bulletins on provincial initiatives and research being undertaken in the sector, as well as information on upcoming conferences.
- A Web site (formerly [www.eslnewcomer.net](http://www.eslnewcomer.net) and now accessible through [www.tesl.ca](http://www.tesl.ca)). The site includes background information on the National Network and the VSI Initiative as well as an extensive links section on best practices, resources, and research/reports relating to settlement-based language training across the country.
- An advisory committee with representation from all provinces (excluding Quebec). Through teleconferences, the committee has provided guidance and assisted with identifying priority items for settlement language providers (LINC/ELSA/MIIP-ESL) on a national level. This input will be brought to the National Settlement Conference II (October 2003) and the TESL Canada Conference (November 2003) for further discussion and recommendations from conference participants.
- A final written report on the project (for completion late November 2003). The report will include an overview of fall 2003 (NSCII and TESL Canada) conference discussions highlighting priority items for settlement language providers nationally and next steps for the National Network of LINC/ELSA/MIIP-ESL providers.