

Attracting and retaining immigrants outside the metropolis: is the pie too small for everyone to have a piece? The case of Edmonton, Alberta

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Abstract The municipal government of the province of Alberta's capital city, Edmonton, commissioned a study in 2005 to determine how to attract more immigrants. City leaders were perplexed as to why Calgary, a city in the same province, of similar size with the same range of immigrant services, receives double the number of immigrants annually. In this paper, we describe the resulting study and discuss its attraction and retention recommendations. These suggestions are similar to those made by the researchers from other municipalities and regions seeking to increase their population via immigration. We compare Edmonton's municipal and Alberta's provincial immigration policies with those from elsewhere and discuss them in light of the national Canadian immigration policies. Given that the current federal government has no plans to increase immigration levels overall, different provinces and cities in Canada will be put in the position of having to compete for a relatively small number of newcomers, employing many of the same strategies. Without changes to federal policies, many communities may continue to struggle to attract immigrants.

Résumé En 2005, le gouvernement municipal d'Edmonton, la ville capitale de l'Alberta, a commandé une étude pour déterminer les meilleures stratégies d'attirer plus d'immigrants. Les chefs de la ville étaient perplexes devant le fait que Calgary, une ville de la même province, d'une taille comparable et avec des services pour immigrants semblables à ceux d'Edmonton, reçoit deux fois plus d'immigrants annuellement. Cet article porte sur l'étude et expose ses recommandations relatives à l'attraction et à la rétention des immigrants. Ces suggestions ressemblent à celles proposées par des chercheurs dans d'autres municipalités et d'autres régions qui veulent augmenter leur nombre par l'immigration. Nous comparons les politiques municipales d'Edmonton et provinciales d'Alberta en matière d'immigration d'une part, et des politiques d'ailleurs d'autre part, et situons cette comparaison dans le

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contexte des politiques nationales canadiennes en matière d'immigration. Puisque que le gouvernement fédéral canadien actuel ne compte pas augmenter le niveau global d'immigration, les provinces et les villes canadiennes se retrouveront devant la nécessité de se disputer le nombre relativement restreint de nouveaux arrivants, employant surtout les mêmes stratégies. Si les politiques fédérales ne changent pas, il se peut que plusieurs communautés doivent continuer à lutter pour attirer des immigrants.

Keywords Immigration policies · Attraction · Retention · Employment · Barriers

Mots clés Politiques en matière d'immigration · Attraction · Rétention · Emploi · Barrières

This paper highlights an ironic contradiction between, on the one hand, Canadian federal government policies that continue to cap immigration numbers and, on the other hand, some remarkably proactive provincial and municipal policies and programs designed to bring more immigrants to a number of second-tier Canadian cities. After outlining the national and provincial immigration context over the past decade, a time when severe labor shortages have emerged in a number of provinces, we present a case study of how one western Canadian city has been attempting to recruit and keep more immigrants. We discuss selected findings and report recommendations from a 2005 study of the factors that attracted immigrants to the city of Edmonton to make a single argument: even with very proactive efforts by municipalities and provinces to attract and retain immigrants, the desired outcomes will not be met unless the federal government significantly raises its immigration cap, something it apparently is very reluctant to do.

Background

Over the last decade in Canada, researchers and policy makers have begun paying more attention to the issues of attraction and retention of newcomers to communities other than Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal, the three cities that receive the majority of immigrants (CIC 2001). Academics and government researchers have warned policy makers about the looming change in the Canadian demographics. It has been predicted that, by 2011, almost all labor market growth will have to be fed by immigration. In addition to dropping birth rates, the retirement of the “baby boom” generation will result in the growing labor shortages across the country.

The most obvious solution to the problem is to increase the number of immigrants and disperse them geographically across Canada, although it is clear that the majority of immigrants prefer large cities (Hyndman et al. 2006). In 2002, the then-Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Denis Coderre, proposed that a “social contract” be developed, according to which newcomers would agree to live in a particular community for a period of 3 years after arrival. This proposed strategy for ensuring greater dispersion of newcomers was roundly criticized as a coercive, discriminatory action (McIsaac 2003). Ultimately, the notion of a “social contract”

was abandoned, but the Ministry continued to show interest in attracting immigrants to smaller communities (Krahn et al. 2005).

A number of provincial governments, including Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, have made immigration a priority, but Manitoba has been particularly proactive (see Carter et al., this volume). By making extensive use of the *provincial nominee* initiative, a program which allows provincial governments to select immigrants and handle much of the processing that was formerly done by the federal government, Manitoba has boosted its levels of immigration significantly in response to the labor market needs in Winnipeg, a second tier city of approximately 750,000, and in smaller communities as well (Morrish 2004).

Most recently, the province of Alberta has developed an extensive policy to attract and retain immigrants (Government of Alberta 2005). Rapid growth in its oil and natural gas industries has led to Alberta having the lowest unemployment rate in the country, as well as the most severe labor shortages. Because of the unprecedented demand for workers in the oil and natural gas sectors, almost all other sectors of the Alberta economy have been affected. Many companies are at the point where a shortage of qualified workers is seriously hurting business and, indeed, some financially successful businesses have had to close because employees could not be found (Leanne Floden, manager of Human Resources, Education & Training, Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association; personal communication, July 18, 2006). In response, the government of Alberta has taken several significant steps, including a major promotion of the federal *Temporary Foreign Worker* program to employers. At the end of 2006, there were 22,392 temporary foreign workers in Alberta, (CIC 2006a) and this number has certainly increased significantly since then.

Another attempt to lessen the strain on the Alberta labor market involved changing provincial labor legislation so that children as young as 12 could work in fast food restaurants and retail establishments outside of school hours. In March 2007, the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission floated the idea of expanding employment opportunities for 12-year-old children by permitting them to work in the kitchens of bars. This proposal was vetoed by the premier of the province (Thorne 2007), but it points to the desperation of employers who are having difficulty staffing their businesses without significantly increasing their pay rates.

Provincial and Municipal Immigration Policies

Alberta's attempts to address labor shortages with the temporary foreign workers program and the employment of young adolescents are stopgap efforts. The provincial government is now also actively engaged in attracting more immigrants, not only from locations overseas but also from other Canadian provinces through secondary migration. Alberta's first immigration policy was released in 2005 (Government of Alberta 2005). It espoused a holistic approach, partly by increasing the capacity of settlement programs, language training programs, streamlined credential recognition processes, and other resources for newcomers and also by increasing "Albertans' awareness, understanding, and appreciation of human rights, multiculturalism, and diversity" so that "immigrants from diverse cultures and religious traditions" would be welcomed (Government of Alberta 2005, p 7).

A number of Alberta municipalities have also become concerned about the insufficient numbers of immigrants. For example, early in 2005, the Mayor of Edmonton, Alberta publicly stated his goal of attracting more immigrants to that city. The most obvious reason, once again, had to do with labor shortages. The provincial government was estimating that, in the next 10 years, Alberta would be short at least 100,000 workers (Government of Alberta 2005). This concern was well-founded since, for the last 2 years (at the time of writing), the unemployment rate has averaged 3.5%, the lowest in the country (the national average was 6.5%).

A related, but more wide-ranging reason for attracting more immigrants to Edmonton, one shared by many cities across the country, is the recognized connection between the overall social and economic vibrancy of a city and its immigrant population. As both Florida (2002) and Jacobs (1992) have noted, cities in North America that are the most attractive sites, both to live and to conduct business, are places such as San Francisco, Austin, New York, Toronto, and Vancouver—urban areas that appeal to the “creative class”. Each shares certain characteristics, including a large and growing immigrant population. In the province of Alberta, the city of Calgary is fast in becoming a city that is able to attract immigrants in the same way that Toronto and Vancouver do, but Edmonton, like Halifax, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and other second-tier Canadian cities, is not a city of destination for nearly as many immigrants. Fundamentally, as Edmonton’s Mayor appeared to recognize, attracting the creative class is an economic consideration with aesthetic overtones: a city that has a lively arts scene, significant numbers of immigrants, a strong gay community, good educational opportunities, and businesses that rely heavily on intellectual capital is a city that is likely to draw and retain more newcomers.

Edmonton’s Attraction and Retention Study

In this paper, we present a case study of Edmonton’s attempts to become more competitive with other Canadian municipalities with respect to attracting and retaining immigrants. In 2005, the Prairie Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Integration, now the Prairie Metropolis Centre, was invited by an Edmonton City Councilor to conduct a study that would help in explaining why Calgary was attracting many more immigrants than Edmonton. Both municipalities are second-tier cities with metropolitan areas of about 1,000,000. At one time, both cities attracted the same numbers of newcomers annually, but in the recent years, more than half of all immigrants to the province have gone to Calgary, while only a third have come to Edmonton.

Edmonton and Calgary Recent Immigrant Survey

The research team decided that the best way to answer the question about why, compared to Edmonton, Calgary was attracting more immigrants was to survey individuals who had recently chosen to settle in the two cities. In the summer of 2005, adult students in several classes in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs in Edmonton and Calgary were invited to complete a short questionnaire

Table 1 Profile of the survey participants

	Edmonton (%)	Calgary (%)	Total (%)
Female	62	64	63
Male	38	36	37
<25 years of age	12	7	10
25–34	32	35	33
35–44	48	46	47
45 or older	8	12	10
Independent immigrant	55	67	61
Refugee	17	11	14
Family class	21	20	20
Other	7	2	5
<1.5 years in Canada	61	46	53
1.5–2.5 years	22	29	26
2.5–3.5 years	12	10	11
3.5 or more years	5	15	10
High school or less	18	22	20
Some postsecondary	39	35	37
University degree	43	43	43
Unskilled/NR	22	25	24
Technical and skilled	6	10	8
Managers/professionals	72	65	68

Source: Survey of immigrants enrolled in ESL courses in Edmonton and Calgary

about how and why they had chosen their current city of residence and about their perceptions of its positive and negative features. A 10 to 15 min discussion was held with the members of each class after the questionnaires were completed.

Profile of Study Participants

Over 200 recent immigrants participated in the study, 101 in Edmonton and 103 in Calgary. Almost two-thirds of our survey respondents were women (Table 1); most were between 25 and 44 years of age. Over half were independent class immigrants (immigrants selected on the basis of their education, financial status, and skills), compared to 55% of all newcomers nationally. Our sample had a lower proportion of family class members (people who were sponsored to come to Canada by relatives already living in the country), compared to the national figure of 28%, but the proportion of refugees was very similar to the national statistic (13%). The majority of our participants had been in Canada for only 1 or 2 years, as we had hoped, since this is the timeframe when newcomers make their greatest adjustments, including decisions about where to live (Krahn et al. 2005).

Reflecting the general profile of recent immigrants to Canada, sample members in both cities were typically well-educated and highly skilled. A full 43% (in both cities) reported at least 16 years of formal education (equivalent to a university degree). More than two-thirds had worked in professional or managerial occupations in their home country (72% of Edmonton respondents and 65% of Calgary study participants).

We acknowledge that this sample is not fully representative of all the immigrants to Alberta, since only people who require English language instruction were

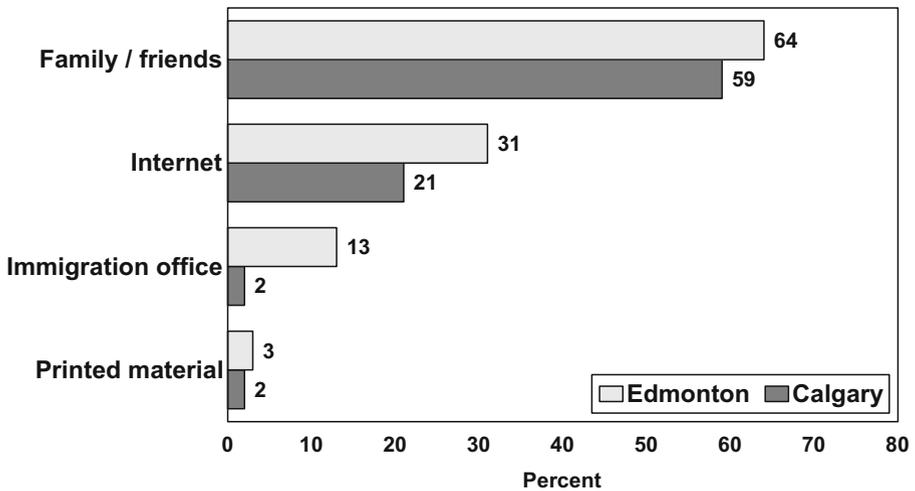


Fig. 1 Sources of information about the current city. Survey participants could answer “yes” to each of these possible sources. Source: Survey of immigrants enrolled in ESL courses in Edmonton and Calgary

included (41.5% of all immigrants to Canada in 2006 reported having no English or French, but because official language proficiency is based on self-report, this is an underestimate of the number of newcomers who require ESL). We chose to survey ESL immigrants because it is precisely these people who have been shown to have greater difficulty settling in Canada (Mulder and Korenic 2005). Furthermore, there is an over-representation of females in our sample. However, in an earlier study, we found that adult male and female newcomers did not differ substantially in terms of their responses to questions regarding resettlement problems (Abu-Laban et al. 1999).

Obtaining Information about Edmonton or Calgary

These recent immigrants were asked how they had obtained information about Edmonton (or Calgary) before arriving. The questionnaire invited them to check one or more possible sources of information including immigration offices, brochures, the Internet, and family/friends. Most survey respondents identified only one source of information. Gender differences in sources of information reported were negligible.

As Fig. 1 reveals, among immigrants in both cities, *family and friends* were clearly the most common source of information about the new city (further analyses revealed, not surprisingly, that 85% of family class immigrants had received information through family/friend networks). Almost one-third of the new Edmonton residents had learned about that city via the *Internet*, compared to one in five Calgary survey participants (further analyses showed, as we might expect, that refugees and family class immigrants were less likely to have used the Internet to gain advance information about their new city). Although one in eight (13%) of the Edmonton survey participants had obtained information about the city from *immigration offices* (presumably in their home countries), it is clear that such

offices and the *printed material* provided through them is *not* how potential immigrants typically seek out new communities. If a host community would like to influence the choices of potential immigrants, the best ways to do so are via their family and friends already the resident in the community and via the Internet.

Why Immigrants Chose Edmonton or Calgary

Survey participants were also asked “*Why did you move to Edmonton (or Calgary)?*” Almost all of the respondents wrote an answer to this question, and about half listed several answers. Reflecting the conclusions drawn in other studies (e.g., Krahn et al. 2005), *economic factors* (e.g., jobs, a strong economy) were mentioned most often (34% of all reasons given). *Family and friends* were mentioned as “pull” factors almost as often (29% of all answers), followed by *quality of life* reasons such as climate, city size, and access to social services (24%), and *educational opportunities* (e.g., ESL, postsecondary opportunities) which comprised 13% of all answers listed by the survey participants.

Female study participants were somewhat more likely to provide family and friends reasons (32% compared to 23% of answers from men), while male respondents were more inclined to mention economic reasons (41% versus 32% of answers from women). Not surprisingly, family class immigrants were less likely than others to indicate that they had chosen their city for economic reasons and considerably more likely to mention family and friends (26% and 53% of their answers, respectively).

Figure 2 shows that, even though Calgary has attracted more job-seeking immigrants in the past few years, Edmonton residents were somewhat more likely to mention economic reasons for choosing their city. This is probably because immigrants who settled in Calgary were more likely to note that family and friends already living in Calgary had convinced them to settle there (likely because of the availability of jobs).

It is also noteworthy that educational opportunities had attracted more Edmonton residents (19%) than Calgary residents (7%). Calgary may be able to attract more immigrants because of its larger ethnocultural communities, but Edmonton appears to have a recruiting advantage in the education sector.

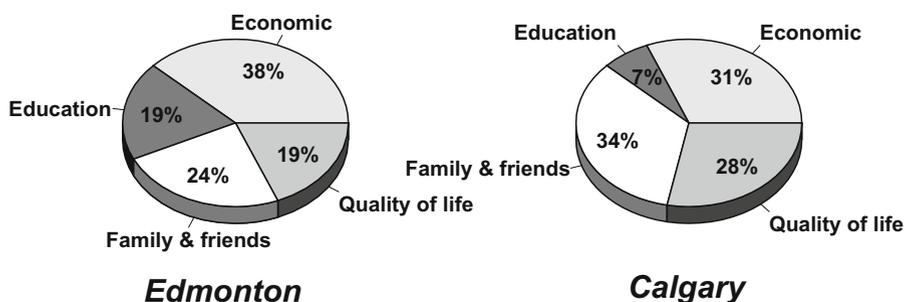


Fig. 2 Reasons for choosing the current city. Most respondents listed at least one reason, and about one-half provided a second. Percentages shown are based on the total number of reasons listed ($n=300$). Source: Survey of immigrants enrolled in ESL courses in Edmonton and Calgary

Best Things About Living in Edmonton/Calgary

To get some sense of what retains immigrants in a city, survey participants were also asked to identify the best things about living in their city. Most wrote something in response to this question, and well over half provided several distinct answers. *Quality of life* reasons such as good climate and a welcoming social environment were mentioned most often (48% of all answers), followed by *economic factors* (31%), and *educational resources* (19%). Women were a bit more likely to mention educational resources (22% compared to 14% of men), while men were somewhat more likely to comment on quality of life attractions (55% versus 45% of women). Differences across immigrant class were of little consequence except for a somewhat higher proportion of refugees (26%) who observed that educational resources were an attraction of living in their new city.

While almost one-third of the reasons provided for coming to their current city (see section above) had involved the presence of family and friends, almost no one (only 2%) mentioned family and friends as among the best things about living in their city. It would appear, then, that while friends and family attract new immigrants, the quality of life and the work and education opportunities within the host city play a large part in retaining them.

Although more Edmonton residents had mentioned economic reasons for choosing their city (see above), Calgary residents were somewhat more likely to mention jobs and a strong economy as the best thing about their new community (Fig. 3). However, once again, Edmonton residents were much more likely (31% compared to only 8% of Calgary residents) to emphasize access to educational resources as the “best thing” about their city. Calgary residents were more inclined to comment on quality of life factors.

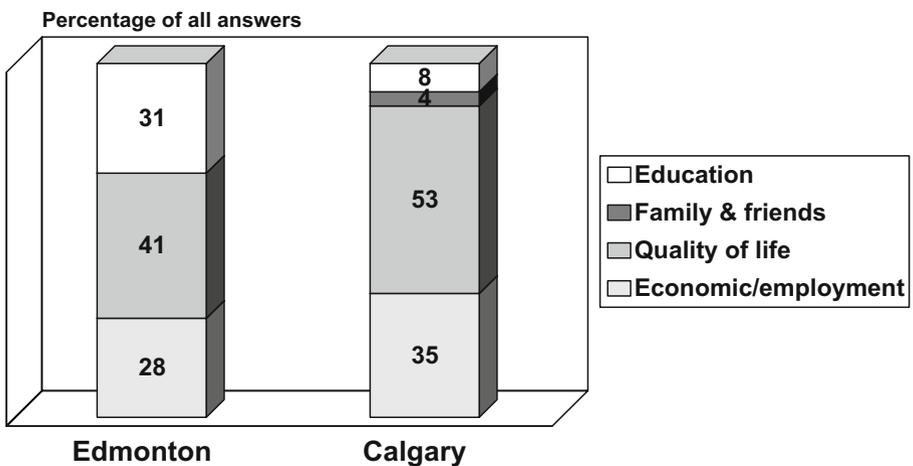


Fig. 3 Best thing about living in current city. Most respondents provided one answer, and about two-thirds provided a second. Percentages shown are based on the total number of answers given ($n=355$). Source: 2005 survey of immigrants enrolled in ESL courses in Edmonton and Calgary

Biggest Problems Living in Calgary/Edmonton

When asked about the “biggest problems” they encountered in their new community, 41% of all the answers provided by the survey respondents (43% in Edmonton; 38% in Calgary) focused on *economic* problems, most often difficulties finding decent employment. Ironically (but not surprisingly, given what other studies have revealed, e.g., Abu-Laban et al. 1999), potential employment opportunities attract immigrants to new communities and employment barriers discourage them after they arrive. In this particular study, independent and family class immigrants (45% and 41%, respectively) were more likely than refugees (25%) to identify economic/employment difficulties as the more problematic aspect of living in their city. As Fig. 4 shows, men were somewhat more likely to note economic/employment problems (46% compared to 38% of answers from women).

However, poor job prospects are not immigrants’ only problems. Quality of life concerns such as limited social services, poor public transport, and a difficult climate were mentioned almost as often (37% of all answers). Women were a bit more likely than men (39% versus 33%) to mention quality of life problems (Fig. 4), but refugees were much more likely to focus on such concerns (61% of all their answers). The third largest category (19%) involved problems encountered because of limited command of the English language. Only a small number of answers to this question (3%) focused on the absence of family and friends in the city.

Immigrants who had settled in Edmonton and Calgary answered the “quality of life” question quite similarly. However, when we look more closely within the category, we see that Calgary residents were more likely to mention the city’s climate as a problem (19 answers versus only seven from Edmonton). Thus, very few new residents of Edmonton talked about their city’s climate as either a good thing or a bad

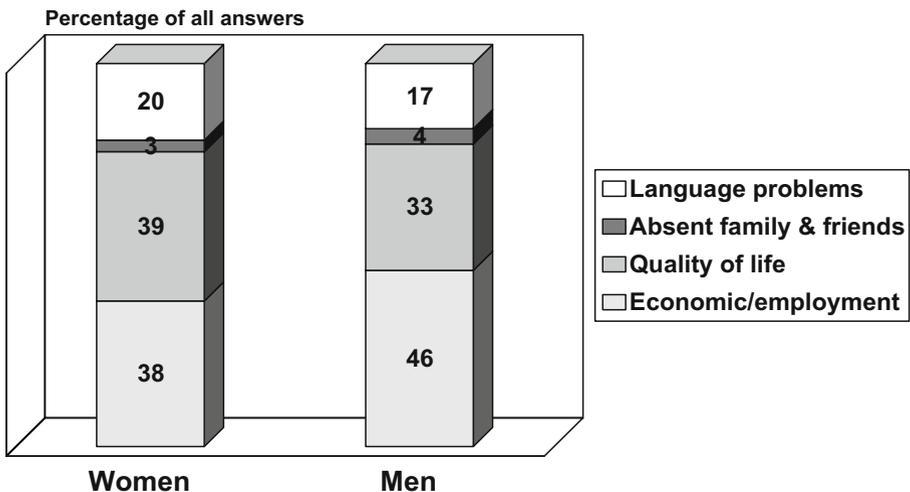


Fig. 4 Biggest problem living in current city. Respondents could give more than one answer, but most listed only one. Percentages shown are based on the total number of answers ($n=225$). Source: Survey of immigrants enrolled in ESL courses in Edmonton and Calgary

thing. In Calgary, climate figured a bit more prominently in the newcomers' assessments of the city, although opinions about the climate were clearly mixed.

Looking to the Future

Eight out of ten of the recent immigrants now living in Edmonton answered "yes" in response to the question about whether they would encourage friends and relatives to live in Edmonton (this question was omitted from the Calgary questionnaire). A similar proportion (79%) indicated that they were personally planning to stay in Edmonton compared to 85% of the Calgary respondents. Thus, despite the employment barriers and settlement and adjustment difficulties they faced in their new homes, a large majority of recent immigrants remained positive about their choice of Edmonton.

Stakeholder Meetings

A second component of the study consisted of two stakeholder meetings in Edmonton. The first was designed to elicit suggestions from the participants as to how the city could attract and retain immigrants, while the second allowed the researchers to report back to the group on the results of the immigrant survey and ask for assistance in identifying information gaps and setting priorities. Participants in both meetings were representatives from settlement agencies, social service agencies, language training programs, school boards, ethnocultural organizations, and provincial and federal government personnel. In the first meeting, a wide range of topics (over 25) were raised but the group agreed that the main issues that the City of Edmonton should address are barriers to employment (a lack of recognition of foreign credentials and requirements for Canadian work experience), inadequate housing, and negative public opinion about immigrants. Stakeholders observed that many people, including some in higher levels of government, do not recognize the contribution that newcomers make. Participants agreed that the City could stage a public awareness campaign that would help make newcomers feel welcome while at the same time dispelling some of the myths about them.

A wide-ranging discussion took place at the second stakeholder meeting. Although the intent of the meeting was to determine whether there were gaps in the researchers' recommendations (based on the survey data and the first stakeholder meeting), the discussion came back to the central issues of concern. Participants again stressed the need for credential recognition and recognition of previous work experience. They also focused on the matter of "welcoming communities" and the concomitant need for antiracism programs for citizens of the host community. Affordable housing for large families was the another priority issue. As the participants noted, it does not make sense for the City to try to attract newcomers if there is nowhere for them to live when they arrive.

One topic that received only cursory discussion at the first meeting dominated the second. Problems faced by children of immigrants in the kindergarten to grade 12 (K–12) education system were outlined. It was suggested that the City should lobby school districts and the provincial government to develop differentiated programs for ESL students who have experienced educational gaps, particularly junior high and high school students who have limited literacy in their first language.

Following the survey of recently arrived immigrants, the two consultations with relevant stakeholders and a scan of websites from other cities and provinces in Canada, a final set of recommendations was developed (see [Appendix](#)). Five *attraction* strategies were suggested; the principal one focused on the changes to the City of Edmonton's website. However, the majority of the study's recommendations addressed *retention*. Many had to do with reducing barriers typically faced by newcomers such as credential recognition, discrimination, inadequate services in the K–12 school system, and a lack of affordable housing—the issues that arose in the survey and the stakeholder focus groups. The City of Edmonton has since responded by allocating funding to act on several of the recommendations. In fact, a City Council brief indicates that “Many cities in Canada have adopted or are adopting similar measures, and if Edmonton does not do so, other cities may be better positioned to attract immigrants in the future” (Kroening 2006, p 2).

Competition for Immigrants

The briefing note for Edmonton's City Council was accurate—many of the recommendations for the attraction and retention of newcomers are reflected in the suggestions made by the other researchers for their municipalities and in policies already in place elsewhere. Cook and Pruegger (2003) suggested that the City of Calgary should develop integration strategies such as employment services, community advisory groups, affordable housing, and equitable human resource practices. Furthermore, several other Canadian cities are now also facing labor shortages and in a position similar to that of Edmonton and Calgary.

Garcea (2006) reported that the City of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan has commissioned a study to develop a plan to attract and retain immigrants and, moreover, “it will be similar to the one that was produced for the City of Edmonton” (p 19). The City of London, Ontario instigated a task force that focused on the attraction and retention of newcomers. The task force recommended that London be made a more welcoming city, and a ‘*Welcoming Cultural Diversity in London*’ plan was implemented. The plan includes increasing immigrant access to social services, creating a welcoming environment, ensuring better credential recognition strategies, and other related strategies (Brochu and Abu-Ayyash 2006).

The municipality of Sudbury, Ontario is also eager to attract and retain immigrants, and has decided that the best approach to do so is to create a welcoming community, increase employment opportunities, and educate public school students “about cultural diversity and antiracism” (Block 2006, p 39). Sherbrooke, Quebec has instituted an immigration plan that entails making municipal services accessible to newcomers, encouraging intercultural harmony, and ensuring that immigrants are included in all areas of municipal endeavor (Corriveau and La Rougery 2006).

The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and the Coordinating Committee on Newcomer Integration hired a consulting firm to suggest policy directions for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to attract more immigrants to that province (Goss Gilroy 2005) and, in March of 2007, the government announced the province's immigration strategy “Diversity ~ Opportunity and Growth” (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2007). The new policy includes strategies for

attraction and retention that are very similar to the ones that other provinces and cities have identified.

Nova Scotia and New Brunswick have been exploring a variety of possibilities for attracting newcomers to their regions (Akbari 2005). Hyndman et al. (2006) have recommended that the small communities in British Columbia will need strong incentives to attract immigrants. They suggested that “family reunification not normally allowed under Canada’s Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act” would draw individuals who might not otherwise settle in a small center. They also suggested that tax credits might lure immigrants, and they revisited the notion of a social contract.

Barriers Faced by Newcomers

The common strategies that have been proposed for the attraction and retention of immigrants in cities across Canada clearly reflect the types of barriers typically faced by newcomers when they arrive. In fact, Citizenship and Immigration Canada has posted a list of the most prevalent employment barriers on their own website: “Nonrecognition of international credentials and work experience; lack of Canadian work experience; inability to communicate in English or French and insufficient labour market information prior to immigrating to Canada” (CIC 2007).

Added to their short list are the following challenges for economic integration. Immigrants often arrive in a community with insufficient or inadequate information about the local labor market (Abu-Laban et al. 1999). They also may lack access to the informal networks often used to find good jobs by Canadian-born job seekers (Krahn et al. 2000; Li 2004). It is noteworthy that, despite the very low unemployment rates in Edmonton over the past few years, these barriers were still encountered by many of the newcomers we surveyed in 2005.

Along with employment opportunities, other aspects of community life can affect the ultimate retention of immigrants. Of critical importance is the availability of affordable quality housing. The irony for many immigrants is that the stronger the local labor market, the more costly the housing market. The presence in the host community of family and friends, or simply others from the immigrant’s own ethnic background, is a crucial factor in the attraction of newcomers (Statistics Canada 2003). If such communities are absent, people may choose to leave to join relatives in another larger city (Abu-Laban et al. 1999). Similarly, a lack of willingness on the part of members of the wider community to accept newcomers can cause people to seek out larger concentrations of their ethnic compatriots elsewhere.

The availability of a wide range of well-resourced settlement agencies is also a core element of successful immigrant retention and attraction. Of particular concern for many immigrants in recent years has been the limited range of educational opportunities for English language training, for job training and retraining, and for college/university programs for both the immigrants themselves and their children (Abu-Laban et al. 1999).

Federal Immigration Policy

It is readily apparent that provincial and municipal governments across Canada are anxious to attract and retain immigrants and that many have recently identified similar strategies to do so. However, as mentioned at the outset, they are working with a relatively fixed pool of newcomers. The federal government has consistently set annual targets of 245,000–260,000 for over 10 years and, in May of 2006, the then Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Monte Solberg, announced that the federal government would continue with the status quo, an admission rate of approximately 260,000 persons a year (Campion-Smith 2006).

Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Ministry responsible for immigration, has a backlog of approximately 800,000 immigration applications, some of which have been in the queue for several years. The current government has chosen to try to eliminate the backlog before increasing the annual targets for immigration. Thus, Canada will still be admitting newcomers according to the policies and quotas that have been in place for some time.

Other Challenges to the Regionalization of Immigration

In addition to the limited numbers of potential immigrants to Canada each year, second-tier and smaller cities also face other factors that may have a deleterious effect on increasing their numbers of newcomers. First, the much larger municipalities of Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal are not interested in decreasing their share of newcomers. There is a strong sense in each of those cities that immigrants are important to the economy and to the life of the city. Toronto has launched the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC, *nd*) to address the problems that immigrants typically face, and the Government of Ontario instituted legislation in December of 2006 to fine regulatory bodies if they do not fairly recognize foreign credentials (Mastromatteo 2007). If this legislation is effective, Ontario may continue to attract the majority of newcomers to Canada despite the efforts by other provinces and municipalities to compete for newcomers.

Second, there are other countries that are also facing labor shortages that are competing with Canada for immigrants. Australia, New Zealand, and the United States are all dependent on immigration, and Australia, in particular, has become very aggressive in terms of recruitment in recent years (Cobb-Clark and Connolly 1997).

Even countries that have traditionally been providers of immigrants are now actively seeking newcomers. In 2005, the First Minister of Scotland came to Canada to try to lure Canadians of Scottish heritage to emigrate to Scotland. China, the country providing the largest group of immigrants to Canada since 1998 (CIC 2006b), has now introduced a policy to attract many Chinese back home and is actively recruiting expatriates in Canada to come back to China (Woo and Zhang 2006). Not only are some immigrants returning to their country of origin but the numbers of newcomers from China has dropped 22% in the first two quarters of 2006 compared to the numbers at the same time in 2005 (CIC 2006c). India, the

second largest provider of newcomers to Canada, has also started to draw immigrants back home from Canada and the United States (Rai 2005) although the numbers of arrivals have not declined (CIC 2006c).

Given the constraints outlined above, the only chance that Edmonton and other second-tier cities and smaller communities have for substantially increasing immigration is for the federal government to revisit its immigration policy. Although provincial nominee programs such as the one in Manitoba (see Carter et al., this volume) can skirt the backlog problem faced by the federally administered immigrant files, there is still an upper limit on the overall numbers of immigrants allowed annually, one that is too low to ensure increased immigration to smaller centers across the country.

Major systemic changes are necessary in the way public education integrates immigrant children and postsecondary institutions integrate immigrant adults. Other publicly funded institutions, most notably the health care system, also need to adapt a great deal more. Housing policies targeting lower income citizens will be required, particularly in the “hot” urban labor markets (like Edmonton and Calgary) where housing costs have soared. Urban transportation policies that advantage long-time residents (who own vehicles) and disadvantage newcomers reliant on public transit also need attention.

Another difficult challenge is changing public attitudes. Most of the policies that provinces and municipalities have developed in the last few years talk about “welcoming communities”, but there is very little evidence that political leaders have any tangible plans for addressing this issue. Over the years, discrimination has been the unfortunate experience of many immigrants. Historically, the Ukrainians on the prairies, the Japanese and Chinese in British Columbia, the Chinese on the prairies, and the Germans and Italians in Ontario were all treated badly. More recent newcomers also report incidents of discrimination that is tied in severity to skin color (Abu-Laban et al. 1999). If Canada is to experience geographically dispersed immigration, the citizens of the country will have to change along with the legislation and policies and that is a huge challenge.

Because all immigration policy, at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels, is driven almost exclusively by economic considerations, it is unlikely that we will see significant change in the selection process or the programs that are in place to facilitate the integration. Yet, it is clear from what the immigrants themselves say and from what stakeholders such as representatives of settlement agencies report that social and education factors are paramount. Max Frisch, the Swiss playwright, coined the expression “We want workers—human beings will come” (p. 23, International Labor Organization 2006). Rather than focusing so intensely on the economy, in the 21st century, Canada should perhaps consider improving what it has to offer newcomers, and it should also consider opening its doors a little wider.

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Appendix: Recommendations to the City of Edmonton for Attracting and Retaining Immigrants, 2005

Promoting Edmonton

1. The City should send representatives to immigrant trade shows overseas
2. The City should consult *Attracting and retaining immigrants: A toolbox of ideas for smaller centres* (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, nd)
3. Given the importance of educational opportunities for immigrants and potential immigrants, the City should work with school boards and public postsecondary institutions in Edmonton to develop a strategy that includes both marketing the city and welcoming immigrants
4. The City should develop a comprehensive website specifically designed for the potential residents, highlighting appealing features of Edmonton. The website should also have information that will help an immigrant family settle, such as brief descriptions of the main settlement agencies with links to their sites. Similarly, there should be links to the three school boards; it should be made clear that all three are publicly funded. The website should have promotional material in the languages of the largest immigrant communities, and immigrants who are already here should be encouraged to write about their own experiences in Edmonton

Making Edmonton a more welcoming city to retain newcomers

5. The City should ensure its own employees receive cultural sensitivity training for anyone who comes into contact with members of the public. The police, in particular, should be provided with additional resources to work with ethnocultural communities to build trust
6. The City should undertake an inventory of the services for newcomers that already exist. The services on the inventory should then be evaluated for their accessibility by immigrants
7. Useful services that already exist should be promoted
8. The City should ensure that interpreters are both well-trained and well-paid
9. Equitable hiring practices should be in place such that the employees of the City reflect the ethnic composition of Edmonton residents
10. City managers should be evaluated on their ability to integrate immigrants into their departments
11. The City should lobby the province whose responsibility it is to work with professional bodies, unions, postsecondary institutions, and employers to remove credential recognition barriers for immigrants
12. The City should develop an internship program to provide a specific number of immigrants each year with Canadian work experience
13. The City should develop a social marketing campaign to improve public awareness of the benefits of immigrants
14. The City should institute an event such as *Celebrating the Welcoming City: Edmontonians who Make a Difference*, in which both Canadian-born and immigrant citizens would be honored. At the same time, the City should continue to support the RISE awards (coordinated by the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers) which are focused primarily on immigrants and immigrant serving agencies

15. The City should partner with large employers such as Syncrude on a publicity campaign about the need for workers
16. The City should bring together employers who champion immigrant workers to talk to other employers about their experiences in venues such as the Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Clubs
17. The City should develop an antiracism campaign that focuses on all Edmontonians—Aboriginal people, immigrants, and Canadian-born
18. The City should provide newcomers with easily accessible information on how to find the accommodation
19. More low income housing that can accommodate large families and more housing coops should be made available
20. Improved public transportation options are necessary
21. The City should actively lobby the Department of Education on a number of points that affect the children of many immigrants
22. The City should encourage public postsecondary institutions to develop action plans to make their institutions more welcoming to immigrants. This would include components such as assessment of international credentials, student services, mentoring programs, cross-cultural competency training for all personnel and instructors, as well as supports for the immigrant teaching staff
23. In conjunction with the province and local settlement agencies, the City of Edmonton should determine what materials about laws and bylaws affecting immigrants are already available. The City should help with the distribution of these materials
24. Where there are gaps, the City should produce pamphlets in a range of languages on pertinent bylaws (e.g., landlord/tenant rights; home owners' responsibilities)
25. The City should ensure that landlords are aware of their responsibilities
26. The City should work more closely with the existing agencies and ethnocultural communities. Ethnocultural communities should be provided with core information regarding life in Edmonton (housing, tenant rights, bylaws, recreational services, and so on) because many independent and family sponsored newcomers will not access traditional sources of information
27. The City should work with neighboring communities to encourage them to engage in similar welcoming activities, particularly with their own civic employees

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