

**Immigration in Nova Scotia
A Report of the Halifax Chamber of Commerce
July 2004**

INTRODUCTION

In September 2000, the Halifax Chamber of Commerce published a discussion paper on immigration, recommending that the Nova Scotia government bring together stakeholders to develop a coordinated plan for increasing immigration to the province.

Since that time, there have been many developments in the issue of immigration, both nationally and provincially. However, many of the Chamber's key recommendations have not yet been acted upon.

The purpose of this policy document is to outline the current situation of immigration to Nova Scotia and to provide a revised set of recommendations to urge government and other stakeholders to act in a timely fashion to increase the attraction, integration and retention of immigrants to Nova Scotia.

BACKGROUND

The Halifax Chamber of Commerce is a best-practice business organization that continuously strives to make Halifax an even more attractive city in which to live, work and play. It is a politically neutral, independent organization that is funded solely by the business community. The Chamber is a policy advocate, developing positions and recommendations to shape and enhance business policy. The Chamber is responsive to the needs of its 2,000 members by offering programs and services to foster business success. It is the public voice of the business community - ensuring our business environment is attractive, competitive and open for growth.

The Halifax Chamber of Commerce has a long history of support for immigration as an effective tool for economic growth. In 1999, the Chamber's International Business Committee began re-examining the issue of immigration and formed a sub-committee, which is still active. A member of the sub-committee is also a member of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's Task Force on Immigration Law and Policy. The Halifax Chamber concurs with the comment of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce that immigrants are critical to the economic viability and success of our nation.

ALERT: IMMIGRATION TO NOVA SCOTIA DECLINING /2

Immigration to Nova Scotia grew significantly from 1991-95, and has been decreasing since then. In 1996, 3,223 immigrants came to Nova Scotia, while in 2002, the number dropped by over 50% to only 1,419. Nova Scotia has 3% of the Canadian population; therefore a proportionate number of the immigrants to Canada would be approximately 6,900-7,500 newcomers annually.

While a decrease is being experienced in some other parts of Canada, it is more pronounced in Nova Scotia. In fact, we have never received our proportionate share of immigrants and we have now gone from 1.4% of the national total to 0.6%. (See Table 1) In response to these downward trends, several other provinces have been working to increase their immigration numbers for the past few years, but Nova Scotia is just beginning. (See Table 2)

In addition, many of those who came to this province have not stayed. Of the 27,051 people who immigrated to Nova Scotia in the decade following 1991, only 10,290 (38%) continued to live here in 2001. In order to improve current situation, we need **more than ever** to strengthen and coordinate stakeholder efforts to attract newcomers and retain those who have already settled in the province.

IMMIGRATION - AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF ECONOMIC GROWTH

As well as adding to our population, immigrants make significant contributions to the economy. Many come with financial resources, education, training and work experience. They create jobs and their presence ensures the development of an appropriate labour market, producing a "brain gain". In a province such as Nova Scotia seeking to expand overseas markets, immigrants' international contacts and cultural understanding may be crucial. Immigrants become consumers, employees and employers. Business immigration alone was a significant factor in Nova Scotia's growth in the last decade. As well, a multicultural community encourages local and foreign investment; and immigrants bring new insights and methodologies that help to grow innovation.

IMMIGRATION - THE MAJOR COMPONENT OF POPULATION GROWTH

In order to sustain our economic performance we need to grow our population. The demographic records and projections for our province make it clear that, absent immigration, Nova Scotia's population would have essentially been DECLINING for the past four years. In fact, thanks to immigration, the provincial population rose by a total of 1,261 from 2001-03 (See Table 3).

These figures are especially striking when compared to those from 1997-99. During that period, the total population gain after immigration was 8,329, almost seven times the gain in the past three years.

The demographic and immigration data reveal that the situation is now critical: without immediate action to reverse the decline in immigration to Nova Scotia, the province will soon face a shrinking population without other sources of growth.

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER ACTIVITY

Stakeholder activity in the area of immigration has been growing steadily. Both government and non-government organizations recognize the importance of immigration and are beginning to analyze the issue. The priority now is that these efforts be coordinated, so as to ensure effective collaboration and use of resources.

Immigration Partnership Conference

In April 2003, a group of stakeholders, led by the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association, held a conference on immigration to Nova Scotia, entitled "Opportunities for Collaboration". Over 130 participants from the government and non-government sectors considered the key issues facing Nova Scotia and explored ways to work together to improve the province's immigration climate. The final report of the conference provides an outline of key points to direct the continuing work in this area. (See Appendix and http://www.misa.ns.ca/NS_IP/conference.htm)

The Partnership conference produced a basic blueprint for action on immigration to Nova Scotia. Three critical action areas identified at the conference were:

1. educating the public about immigration-related issues
2. influencing public policy
3. improving newcomer services

1. Educating the Public about Immigration-Related Issues

Several private and public partners have begun to tackle the issue of public education. On December 8, 2003, stakeholders organized a visit by Manitoba business leaders who have a very active role in immigration policy development. 55 individuals attended roundtable sessions through the day and 140 people came to the luncheon to hear the presentations.

Private sector groups such as the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, NovaKnowledge and the Greater Halifax Partnership have all continued this education process, through events, publications and discussions. This effort must continue in a systematic way, with the involvement of the provincial government, to build awareness and openness among Nova Scotians and contribute to the development of truly welcoming communities.

2. Influencing Public Policy

In December 2003, the province hired a Director of Immigration and Settlement to work on the development of a provincial immigration strategy. This strategy should provide the province with the opportunity to be pro-active and to establish a comprehensive and long-term approach to attracting, integrating and retaining more newcomers.

The provincial strategy should also serve as a framework for developing municipal immigration strategies that should reflect specific features and needs of Halifax.

The Nova Scotia Nominee Program, an agreement established in August 2002 between the Government of Canada and the Government of Nova Scotia, must be an integral part of the provincial strategy. This type of agreement has been used very effectively in other provinces and has much potential for bringing immigrants who will stay in Nova Scotia. The program provides the province with the opportunity to set criteria for attracting those whom it believes will contribute to the economy of Nova Scotia and to facilitate their quicker arrival. To date, the use of this tool has been limited, both in scope and in numbers. The program needs to be reviewed with the active engagement of the private sector.

3. Improving Newcomer Services

While the interest in immigration grows, support services for immigrants continue to be cut in Nova Scotia. Citizenship & Immigration Canada (CIC) has cut funding for settlement services in Nova Scotia for six consecutive years. The amount has dropped from \$3.2 million in 1998-99 to \$2.1 million in 2004-05.

The CIC funding formula for settlement programs is primarily tied to the number of newcomers arriving in a region; therefore, as the number of immigrants to Nova Scotia continues to decline, so does funding for support services for those immigrants. This model attempts to ensure an equal amount of settlement dollars per immigrant is available, but that ignores the reality that if there is no support for integration and retention, attraction will not improve.

The informal channels by which immigrants are attracted to a region are powerful and effective. Those who settle and integrate successfully will be marketing Nova Scotia to other prospective newcomers, intentionally or otherwise.

The province has in the past two years begun to provide some funding for settlement, but only on a project basis. Government support for such services needs to be delivered efficiently and effectively, with accountability and flexibility built in, and with multi-year funding contracts focused on outcomes rather than activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Engage stakeholders to assist in developing an immigration policy and action plan to attract, integrate and retain a proportionate share of newcomers. Using the recommendations of the Immigration Partnership Conference, develop an effective immigration policy that reflects the overall fiscal position of the province and seeks to:
 - creatively utilize the resources and skills of the immigrant community
 - encourage the private sector to commit resources to attract, integrate and retain immigrants
 - maximize the effectiveness of current provincial spending through focused partnership and co-ordination
 - make the most effective use of federal funds already available to support economic development, growth and immigration

- 2) Clarify roles and accountabilities for immigration by:
 - coordinating and centralizing the responsibility and authority for immigration within the most appropriate department
 - identifying partnerships to support an immigration policy
 - supporting the creation of a Premier's Advisory Council on Immigration, comprising key stakeholders who can assist in planning and monitoring the provincial immigration strategy, and its implementation

- 3) Implement the Nova Scotia Nominee Program in an effective and efficient way that reflects the experience and lessons learned by other provinces. Some of the key pieces of this program should be:
 - a clear and precise definition of the goals and objectives of all components of the program
 - a well developed marketing plan that supplies clear and useful information to potential immigrants and focuses on the true strengths and needs of the Nova Scotia economy

- a plan to measure the program results and mandatory annual report
 - equal focus on economic immigrants component and a strongly marketed, employer-driven skilled worker component
 - a user-friendly website showing relevant and easily accessible information, including a description of the application process and timeline, with a link from the government's homepage
 - a web-based application process, whereby prospective immigrants can apply directly to the province for consideration
- 4) Maximize the benefits of immigration by ensuring that support systems are in place to facilitate the early and successful entry of immigrants into the Nova Scotia economy.
- clear and practical information for prospective and new arrivals
 - consistent provision of support to help immigrants adjust and integrate into their new communities
 - speedy recognition and a timely accreditation process for international qualifications in professions and skilled trades
 - bridging programs (such as the New Beginnings Program) which facilitate access to employment
- 5) Build welcoming communities in the province by leading and supporting public education on immigration through:
- public debate
 - programs to educate the public on the benefits and necessity of immigration to the province's future vibrancy

APPENDIX

**Table 1
Total Immigration 1991-2002**

Year	Canada	Nova Scotia	Nova Scotia as % of Canada
1991	230,781	1,500	0.6
1992	252,842	2,359	0.9
1993	255,819	3,019	1.2
1994	223,875	3,467	1.5
1995	212,504	3,585	1.7
1996	226,050	3,223	1.4
1997	216,044	2,905	1.3
1998	174,100	2,086	1.2
1999	189,802	1,608	0.8
2000	227,313	1,591	0.7
2001	250,346	1,708	0.7
2002	229,058	1,419	0.6

Source: Citizenship & Immigration Canada / Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association

**Table 2
Ranking of Provinces & Territories for Total Immigration, 2002**

1. Ontario	133,617	58.33%
2. Quebec	37,619	16.42%
3. British Columbia	34,000	14.84%
4. Alberta	14,729	6.43%
5. Manitoba	4,621	2.01%
6. Saskatchewan	1,665	0.72%
7. Nova Scotia	1,419	0.62%
8. New Brunswick	710	0.31%
9. Newfoundland	405	0.18%
10. PEI	110	0.05%
11. Northwest Territories	61	0.03%
12. Yukon	48	0.02%
13. Nunavut	12	0.01%

Source: Citizenship & Immigration Canada, The Monitor/Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association

Table 3
Components of Population Change in Nova Scotia
2001-2003 (July 1-June 30)

Component	2001	2002	2003	Total Change 2001-2003
Births	8,922	8,839	8,710	26,471
Inter-provincial In	15,313	16,331	18,010	49,654
Deaths	7,847	7,977	8,243	24,067
Inter-provincial Out	17,390	17,229	17,233	51,852
Emigration	1,098	1,094	1,101	3,293
Total Change (net of immigration)	-2,100	-1,130	143	-3,087
Immigration	1,761	1,614	1,259	4,634
TOTAL	-339	484	1,116	1,261

Source: Nova Scotia Department of Finance Population Statistics

From the NS Immigration Partnership Conference Report

KEY POINTS

Participants and guest speakers shared many ideas, observations and experiences during the one and half days of the conference. From the presentations of the immigrant panel and the guest speakers to the deliberations of the five breakout groups, input and feedback were never in short supply. Several key points emerged early, to be repeated throughout discussions and at the concluding plenary session:

Immigration is a positive force

- X immigrants who stay in Nova Scotia provide long-term, positive benefits to the province's economic, demographic, social and cultural development
- X demographic and economic data suggest urgency in this matter: Nova Scotia needs to act now to secure future growth
- X economic, family and refugee categories are all needed to provide balance in immigration

Creating a truly welcoming community is essential

- X immigration is an issue of the heart: people will only come and stay if they can make personal contact and build supportive (not necessarily large) networks
- X a welcoming community and information needs to be available before immigration
- X Nova Scotians' collective attitude toward immigration requires examination and challenge before wider acceptance of immigrants is possible

Immigration is a shared responsibility

- X commitment is critical for results; it must come from each of the stakeholder groups
- X leadership from the provincial and municipal governments is essential for success
- X the issues are complex and multi-layered and require a multi-stakeholder response with a collaborative approach
- X ensuring the provision of comprehensive and integrated settlement services is a shared responsibility across jurisdictions
- X communities that know best their own needs should develop their own strategies, supported by broader efforts to decentralize immigration

Economic opportunities are critical to attraction, integration and retention

- X people will only come and stay if they can secure appropriate employment or find business opportunities
- X immigrants' access to the labour market requires improvement
- X a climate of opportunity is needed to not only attract immigrants but meet the aspirations of those who already call Nova Scotia home

These recurring key points provide essential direction as work continues to improve the climate for immigration in Nova Scotia.