

# Immigration: A Key to Nova Scotia's Economic Growth

September 25, 2000

In the early to mid-1990s, immigration to Nova Scotia, particularly by entrepreneurs, grew significantly thanks to recruitment by government and private consultants.

More recently though, other provinces have been actively seeking immigrants to boost their population and contribute to their provincial economies while immigration to Nova Scotia has dropped dramatically. Our province appeared to take a less active role in promoting itself to immigrants.

To counter this recent trend, Nova Scotia needs to act quickly to make the most of its strengths. An aggressive marketing plan and a well-developed provincial nominee program must be an important part of a new immigration strategy. Support services and public education programs are also essential to success. Early and effective economic integration will maximize the benefits of immigration and ensure that those who come, stay.

In the current fiscal context, Nova Scotia needs to maximize immigration as an economic development tool without affecting the provincial bottom line. A new policy must be founded on an aggressive re-adjustment of current provincial spending, more effective use of existing federal funds, and be leveraged by the resources of key private sector stakeholders and the immigrants themselves.

The Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce is currently making recommendations in a submission entitled "Discussion Paper on Immigration to Nova Scotia" to Premier John Hamm, Hon. Jane Purves, Minister of Education, Hon. Gordon Balsler, Minister of Economic Development, and other key immigration stakeholders.

The Chamber recommends that the Province:

- 1) Bring together stakeholders to act on Voluntary Planning's recommendation and "immediately develop an immigration policy and action plan and work with Ottawa to attract our proportionate share of newcomers."
- 2) Develop an effective immigration policy that reflects the Province's fiscal position.
- 3) Clarify roles and accountabilities with such action as placing responsibility for immigration with the Department of Economic Development, and developing a process in which all interested stakeholders can provide ongoing input to the immigration strategy.
- 4) Adopt a provincial nominee program that reflects the experience in other provinces, some key elements of which include setting a fixed target of nominees, a clear determination of sectors or skill sets that are in short supply, and an effective marketing plan.
- 5) 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.

Member feedback on any points raised in the discussion paper are welcome and can be provided by contacting Nancy Conrad, Policy Manager, by phone (468-7111), fax (468-7333) or email ([info@halifaxchamber.com](mailto:info@halifaxchamber.com)). You can obtain a copy of the full discussion paper by clicking on the Policy Update section of our website at [www.halifaxchamber.com](http://www.halifaxchamber.com) or by contacting the Chamber office at any of the coordinates given above.

*The Chamber thanks the many volunteers, particularly the International Business Committee, for their input to date on this issue.*

**POLICY UPDATE**



**METROPOLITAN HALIFAX  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

*Strong Business. Strong Community. Since 1750.*

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## **Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce**

### **DISCUSSION PAPER ON IMMIGRATION TO NOVA SCOTIA**

**Approved by the MHCC Board of Directors on September 21, 2000**

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***Immigration will be a key component of a successful economic development strategy for Nova Scotia.***

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In the early to mid-1990s, immigration to Nova Scotia grew significantly as a result of recruitment by government and private consultants. This was especially true for the business category of immigrant entrepreneur. As more newcomers settled in Nova Scotia, support services were developed in response to needs. A variety of innovative and effective programs provided an important bridge for immigrants to life in Nova Scotia.

By the end of the 1990s, immigration showed a dramatic drop. This was due in part to the national trend, but was more pronounced in Nova Scotia as the provincial government appeared to take a less active role in promoting the province as a destination for immigrants. Other provinces are now very actively seeking immigrants to boost their populations and contribute to their provincial economies. Nova Scotia has the experience and ability to welcome immigrants and to help them to integrate and participate in the economic development of our province, and needs to act quickly to make the most of its strengths.

An aggressive marketing plan involving all interested stakeholders and a well-developed provincial nominee program will be an important part of this strategy. Support services and public education programs are also essential to the success of an immigration strategy. Early and effective economic integration will maximize the benefits of immigration and ensure that those who come - stay.

In the current fiscal context, Nova Scotia needs to maximize immigration as an economic development tool without affecting the provincial bottom line. A coordinated and integrated immigration policy must be founded on an aggressive re-adjustment of current provincial spending, more effective use of existing federal funds, and be leveraged by the resources of key stakeholders in the private sector and the immigrants themselves.

The Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce recommends that the Province of Nova Scotia:

- 1) Bring together stakeholders to act on Voluntary Planning's recommendation and "immediately develop an immigration policy and action plan and work with Ottawa to attract our proportionate share of newcomers."
- 2) 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 attracting and integrating immigrants into the Nova Scotia economy
  - ▶ maximize the effectiveness of current provincial spending through a focus on partnership and co-ordination
  - ▶ make the most effective use of federal funds already available to support economic development, growth and immigration
- 3) Clarify roles and accountabilities for immigration by:

- ▶ placing responsibility for immigration within the Economic Development Department
  - ▶ identifying partnerships to support an immigration policy
  - ▶ developing a process whereby all interested stakeholder groups have input into the provincial immigration strategy on an ongoing basis.
  - ▶ supporting the creation of an informal and voluntary Immigration Council comprising representatives of the stakeholders who can then input into the planning, and assist with the implementation, of a provincial immigration strategy.
- 4) Adopt a provincial nominee program that reflects the experience and lessons learned by other provinces. Some of the key pieces of this program should be:
- ▶ A fixed target of nominees - 200 seems like an appropriate number and one that has worked for Manitoba and New Brunswick.
  - ▶ 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 Scotian economy.
  - ▶ A clear determination of the sectors, occupations or skill sets that are in short supply - Manitoba has done a good job in this area with a clear and detailed list of shortages readily available on-line.
  - ▶ An application process that includes a self-assessment form. The Saskatchewan form is a model worth considering.
  - ▶ A user-friendly website with relevant and easily accessible information. Quebec has made a solid effort in this area.
- 5) 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
  - ▶ supports to help immigrants adjust and settle into their new communities
  - ▶ public education about the benefits and challenges of a successful immigration policy
  - ▶ continued improvements in accreditation of international qualifications in professions and skilled trades

## **BACKGROUND**

The Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce is a voluntary, not-for-profit organization that benefits Metro Halifax and the Atlantic region by providing vital leadership to build a stronger community. The Chamber is a lobby and advocacy group acting on behalf of more than 1,870 corporate and 2,700 individual members; our chief communications vehicle is *Business Voice* magazine.

The 1,870 corporate members of the Chamber employ over 50,000 people, representing more than one quarter of Metro Halifax's labour force of 199,000. As the voice of business, the Chamber works on behalf of small businesses and large corporations alike. Seventy-eight per cent of Chamber members are organizations with 25 or fewer employees. The Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce has the largest membership of any chamber in the Atlantic Provinces and is the largest in Canada among mid-sized cities. It is also the oldest Chamber in North America -- celebrating 250 years in the year 2000 -- and was the first certified to the ISO 9002 international standard of quality.

As the oldest Chamber in North America, and representing a community that was founded by, and strengthened through, immigration, the Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce has a long history of support for immigration as an effective tool for economic growth. Over the past year the Chamber's International Business Committee has been re-examining the issue of immigration. The Chair of the MHCC committee is also a member of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's Task Force on Immigration Law and Policy. The Chamber concurs with the comment of the Canadian Chamber that "immigrants are critical to the economic viability and success of our nation."

As well as adding simple numbers to our population, immigrants make significant contributions to the economy. Many come with financial resources, education, training and work experience. In a province 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.

We note, however, that immigration to our province has been on the decline for the past four years. In 1996, 3,223 immigrants came to Nova Scotia, while in 1999, the number dropped by 50% to only 1,608. While a decrease is being experienced across the country, it is more pronounced in our province. In fact, Nova Scotia has never received its proportionate share of immigrants and we have now gone from 1.4% of the national total to 0.8%. In response to these downward trends, several other provinces have been moving to increase their immigration numbers but not, as of yet, Nova Scotia.

The report of Voluntary Planning's Fiscal Management Task Force, released in January 2000, spoke of the importance of immigration to our community. The Task Force recommended that the Province of Nova Scotia "immediately develop an immigration policy and action plan and work with Ottawa to attract our proportionate share of newcomers." In a letter on March 27, 2000, the Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce encouraged the Premier to endorse this recommendation and take action to pursue it.

In response to this letter, the Province of Nova Scotia has indicated that the Department of Education, with the support of the Economic Development Department, “will be developing a framework agreement on all aspects of immigration relating to the Province of Nova Scotia”. The Chamber considers itself to be an important stakeholder in this matter and offered to supply input into a provincial policy and plan. This discussion paper is intended as the initial step in a community dialogue leading to an effective immigration policy for our province.

## **TOWARD PROSPERITY**

The government of Nova Scotia has launched discussions surrounding a new economic development strategy. Any effective development strategy must seek to maximize the potential return from immigration to Nova Scotia. A well-developed immigration policy will stimulate growth and move the province forward in the directions outlined by the government in its discussion paper, Toward Prosperity.

Skilled immigrants contribute to all the directions identified by the government, and have a critical role to play in the following:

- ▶ **Improving the climate for business**

The climate for business must include a willingness to innovate, to take risks, to move beyond the past. As this quote from a recent publication of the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) indicates, risk taking and innovation are defining characteristics of the business immigrant.

*“I think if you come here as an immigrant, you have already proven you are more venturesome and more aggressive than the average person. It takes guts to get up and go where you don’t know anybody.” – David Grace, NAUTEL*

- ▶ **Ensuring the development of an appropriate labour market**

Immigrants bring with them skills, training and experience not available locally. Other provinces have understood this fact and negotiated agreements with the federal government that allow them to recruit immigrants with specific skill sets. Immigrants create jobs and fill gaps in the labour market, producing a “brain gain”.

- ▶ **Developing export and marketing opportunities**

Immigrants come with linguistic, cultural and business expertise, as well as international contacts that represent a wealth of human resources at our doorstep. The potential of their contribution to the growth of Nova Scotia’s export markets is significant.

- ▶ **Encouraging investment, both local and foreign**

Immigrants have the ability to market Nova Scotia as a destination of choice to their former countries. Successful immigrant investors are the satisfied customers this province needs to attract more foreign investment.

Towards Prosperity states that “partnerships are critical to the province’s economic growth...” Immigrants are poised to be the working partners this government is seeking.

## **IMMIGRATION TRENDS IN NOVA SCOTIA**

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 1999, the number dropped by 50% to only 1,608. While a decrease is being experienced across the country, it is more pronounced in our province. In fact, Nova Scotia has never received its proportionate share of immigrants and we have now gone from 1.4% of the national total to 0.8%.

### ***Business Immigration 1991-99***

<b>Year</b>	<b>Canada</b>	<b>Nova Scotia</b>	<b>Nova Scotia as % Canada</b>
1991	17,213	336	1.9
1992	28,392	1,110	3.9
1993	32,732	1,861	5.6
1994	24,629	2,216	8.9
1995	16,578	2,098	12.6
1996	22,459	1,711	7.6
1997	19,927	1,320	6.6
1998	13,778	825	5.9
1999	13,014	434	3.3

*Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada*

The Atlantic Provinces Economic Council’s Report Card of May 2000 provides an interesting overview of the recent patterns of immigration to Atlantic Canada. It indicates that Nova Scotia has done substantially better than other Atlantic provinces in attracting immigrants. We have been particularly successful in attracting entrepreneurs, but we are weaker when considering our ability to draw skilled workers to our shores. Only 13% of our immigrants are skilled workers, whereas the national average is about 20%. Despite our comparative success our immigration numbers continue to decline and the recent introduction of nominee programs in New Brunswick and Newfoundland will create even more Atlantic region competition for economic immigrants (business, investor and skilled worker immigrants).

In addition to declining numbers in primary immigration, Nova Scotia must also look at reversing the growth trends in secondary migration by immigrants. As in the general Nova Scotian population, secondary migration to other provinces is common among immigrants. There are no statistics to record how many newcomers leave Nova Scotia, but anecdotal information suggests that the proportion is noteworthy. MISA’s Immigrant Entrepreneur

Orientation Program reports that of the 200 participants in the program since 1996, more than 20% have left Nova Scotia.

## 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 stagnant for the past four years.

### Components of Population Change in Nova Scotia, 1997-99

Component	1997	1998	1999	Total Change 1997-99
Births	10,222	9,870	9,673	29,765
Interprovincial – In	16,151	16,095	16,839	49,085
Returning Canadians	262	263	276	801
Deaths	8,007	8,118	8,271	24,396
Interprovincial –Out	17,420	18,518	16,889	52,827
Emigration	786	855	866	2507
<b>Total Change (net of immigration)</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>-447</b>	<b>762</b>	<b>737</b>
Immigration	3188	2796	1608	7592
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3610</b>	<b>2349</b>	<b>2370</b>	<b>8329</b>

Source: Nova Scotia Department of Finance Population Statistics

## CONTRIBUTIONS OF IMMIGRANTS TO NOVA SCOTIA

As well as adding simple numbers to our population, immigrants make significant contributions to the economy. Many come with financial resources, education, training and work experience. **Immigrants become consumers, employees and employers. Immigrants become taxpayers.**

**Most immigrants come with a high level of education.** Recent newspaper reports, quoting a study by Human Resources Development Canada, indicate that "...over 80 per cent of recent immigrants have at least a high school diploma, compared with 60 per cent for non-immigrants. Recent immigrants have almost three times more university degrees than non-immigrants, the study says." (Chronicle Herald, June 27, 2000.)

Statistics from MISA indicate that over 79% of clients in their employment and entrepreneurship programs have completed post-secondary education programs. In a sample of 482 people, highest level of education was as follows:

Less than high school	2%
High school	19%
College/diploma	18%
University degree	61% (includes post-graduate degrees)

In a province seeking to expand overseas markets, **immigrants' international contacts and cultural understanding may be crucial.** Business immigration was a significant factor in Nova Scotia's growth in the last decade. Immigrant entrepreneurs bring experience, energy, and valuable knowledge to the local community. This potential has yet to be developed. To return to increasing business immigration the province must actively seek newcomers under this category and help to direct them into appropriate sectors.

MISA again reports that from its inception in 1986 to 1996, the business class investor program alone brought \$291 million to Nova Scotia and created 2,200 jobs. To Canada as a whole, business investors brought \$3.75 billion and 33,000 jobs. Jobs and money for Canada and Canadians.

## **THE IMPACT OF INDIVIDUAL IMMIGRANTS TO NOVA SCOTIA**

Numbers make a convincing case for the positive overall impact from immigrants. But who are these immigrants?

**Immigrants are skilled workers** like Reza Arefi, P. Eng., Mechanical Engineer. Reza and his family immigrated to Halifax in September 1997 from Iran, where he had 18 years of experience in the oil & gas industry. He started his career as a Project / Site Engineer and eventually moved up to Senior Mechanical Engineer. In the oil & gas industry, he was engaged in Battery Units, Desalting plants, Gas Injection Units, NGL Plants, Gas Compressor Stations, Refineries, Oil Depots, Petrochemical Complexes, Cross Country Pipelines and Gas Distribution Projects.

He was also involved in joint-venture projects with international companies such as SERIMER (French), FOCHI (Italian), and ILBAU (Austrian). Before working in his field here in Halifax, Reza felt it necessary to complete an accreditation process required by the Association of Professional Engineers of Nova Scotia (APENS). While he studied and prepared for exams, Reza took the Immigrant Entrepreneur Orientation Program and the other educational courses offered by MISA and related organizations.

He put what he gained through MISA into action, and purchased a franchise business, hired several employees to work closely with his family (Mina, Ghazal and Ardalan) and joined the Chamber of Commerce. In addition, he continued to network and tried to meet people in his field. He is a member of Publication Committee of APENS and is in contact with MISA and the Chamber of Commerce as well.

In the spring of 2000, after he received his professional engineering license from APENS, Reza obtained an unpaid work placement at Sempra Atlantic Gas, through the New

Beginnings Program at MISA. Before that term ended, he was offered a contract as a consultant engineer, a position in which he is excelling.

**Immigrants are small business entrepreneurs** like George Jeha of Eye Catch Signs. George immigrated to Halifax from Egypt in 1987. He came with a degree in electronics and communications engineering, and experience in running a sign business in Cairo. Within five months he started his own business here, working first out of his home, and eventually moving to the current location on Maynard Street.

Eye Catch Signs produces specialized sign products and now exports to the UK, Germany, Australia, the US, the Netherlands, Spain, France and Denmark. The company is ISO 9001 registered. Eye Catch Signs is determined to "Grow globally, hire locally." Twenty-one of the company's 24 employees come from Nova Scotia (of the remaining three, two are immigrants, and one is from Ottawa and runs the office there).

These employees include graduates from many of the local educational institutions: NSCAD(2), Nova Scotia Community College (2), Saint Mary's University (2), CompuCollege (2), Dalhousie University (1) and Mount Saint Vincent University (1). Eye Catch Signs also has an education program which encourages staff to take part time courses at the Community College to upgrade their skills.

This community based approach has seen sales grow by 25% last year with projections for a further 75% increase in the coming year.

**Immigrants are community builders** like Simon Spatz. Simon came to Canada from Germany in 1950, a 37 year-old survivor of the Holocaust in Poland and of the lonely, frightening times after the war when he'd lost everyone except one sister. In Halifax, speaking no English, he first went into partnership in a grocery store with his wife's brother-in-law, Morris Kohler. In two years, he saved enough, and learned enough English, to buy his own grocery store.

While he was still working six long days a week running South End Market, he launched his real estate business, to be incorporated as Southwest Apartments. He started with a few houses. Some he rented out; some he added on to; some he demolished and replaced with apartment buildings. He got to know enough about the construction business to be his own general contractor. All these years, as his business increased, Simon took little for himself, ploughing every possible penny back into the business.

By the time his son Jim gave up medical practice to join the business in 1987, Southwest Apartments had grown into one of the biggest landlords in Halifax, with more than 1,000 rental units. And since then it has expanded further into office and retail properties, including the prestigious and successful Sunnyside Mall in Bedford. But it also continues to grow in rental housing, and is now building a \$30-million waterfront apartment project in downtown Halifax.

Simon Spatz has contributed significantly to the city's store of quality accommodation and retail and office space. But his greater contribution is to business's reputation in Halifax and beyond. Thanks to Simon, Southwest is known as an enterprise that can be trusted to deal

honestly, to pay its bills, to give customers value for their money, and to do what is best not only for its own bottom line but also for the community at large.

## **EXISTING SUPPORTS FOR INCREASED IMMIGRATION**

Many **community stakeholders** are involved in, or would be impacted by, increasing immigration to Nova Scotia. These stakeholders include: the provincial government (Economic Development, Education, Community Services, Health, Justice and some Regional Development Authorities); the federal government (Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Human Resources Development Canada); Halifax Regional Municipality; the private sector (including business organizations like the Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce, Greater Halifax Partnership, the Alliance of Manufacturers and Exporters Canada, NovaKnowledge, and the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council); Immigrant service providers (several agencies work daily to support immigrants in their integration into life in Nova Scotia); Voluntary Planning; Labour organizations and, professional associations (including: the Association of Professional Engineers, the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Nova Scotia Barristers Society).

**Immigrants themselves** also play a critical role in drawing more immigrants and supporting them in making a positive contribution to society. Here in Nova Scotia, a critical mass has been reached in some immigrant communities that will attract more people. Immigrants are more likely to come to areas where there are amenities and people that will help them feel at home. Halifax now boasts two mosques, several ethnic churches, a Muslim school, numerous ethnic food outlets and other businesses aimed at ethnic markets.

Metro Halifax is made up of a diverse mix of cultural communities that are growing and developing their own networks: Middle Eastern, South Asian, former Yugoslavians, Chinese, Korean. Statistics Canada Census figures for 1996 indicate that in Metropolitan Halifax, almost 30% of the population cite ethnic origins other than French or British, with sizable ethnic communities self identifying as Arab (3,430), East or Southeast Asian (3,160), South European (3,090), South Asian (2,090), East European (1,940) or African (2,500) among many others.

At this point, there are **support systems and services in place** to facilitate the integration of immigrants into the community. Services currently available to support immigrants in their settlement in Nova Scotia include:

1. English as a Second Language training programs for adults and children
2. Employment counseling and pre-employment training
3. School support programs for students and parents
4. Settlement and orientation services
5. Public education
6. Entrepreneur orientation

Following is a flowchart detailing the services offered by the Immigrant Serving Agencies of Metropolitan Halifax (ISAM).

**EXISTING CONCERNS RELATED TO INCREASED IMMIGRATION**

Sources of funding for immigrant attraction and settlement services are a central

**ISAM**

**Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre**  
 3670 Dutch Village Road,  
 Halifax, N.S.

**Mailing address:**  
 P.O. Box 22095, Bayers Road  
 RPO, Halifax, N.S. B3L 4T7  
 Tel: (902) 443-2937  
 Fax: (902) 457-9340

- Services offered:**
- ❖ Full and Part-time Language Instruction
  - ❖ On-site Childcare
  - ❖ English in the Workplace
  - ❖ Computer Skills Training
  - ❖ Computer Assisted Language Learning
  - ❖ Social Activities

**Halifax Regional School Board Adult ESL**  
 3299 Connolly Street,  
 Halifax, N.S. B3L 3P7  
 Tel: (902) 421-7779  
 Fax: (902) 421-7779

- Services offered:**
- ❖ Full-time Language Instruction
  - ❖ Computer Assisted Language Development
  - ❖ English for the Trades
  - ❖ Introduction to Computers
  - ❖ On-site Preschool \$5/day

**Metro ESL Association**  
 6903 Mumford Road,  
 Halifax, N.S.

**Mailing address**  
 PO Box 25056, Hfx. N.S.  
 B3M 4H4  
 Tel: (902) 455-3681  
 Fax: (902) 457-9824

- Services offered:**
- ❖ Citizenship Preparation Classes
  - ❖ Part time Language Instruction
  - ❖ On-site Childcare
  - ❖ Computer Assisted Language Learning

**Metro-Region Immigrant Language Services**  
 136 Pinecrest Drive,  
 Dartmouth N.S. B3A 2J9  
 Tel: (902) 464-2868  
 Fax: (902) 464-2828

- Services offered:**  
**Dartmouth School**
- ❖ Full and Part-time Language Instruction
  - ❖ Onsite Childcare
  - ❖ Job Training and Business Connections

- Outreach ESL In:**
- ❖ Halifax, Dartmouth, Kentville, Wolfville, Truro, Sydney Cape Breton

- Bedford School**
- ❖ Part-time Language Instruction
  - ❖ On-site Childcare

**English as a Second Language Schools**

**ISAM Immigrant Serving Agencies of Metro Halifax-Dartmouth**  
**Mission Statement**

Immigrant Serving Agencies of Metro (ISAM) is a group of community based organizations dedicated to supporting new Canadians in their successful adjustment to life in Nova Scotia. Working in partnership, we engage newcomers in programs and services that are vital to their participation in our community and their contribution to the economy. ISAM members are leaders in shaping public policy and creating a new vision for Nova Scotia.

**Settlement Support Agencies**

**YMCA New Canadians Programs**  
 3663 Dutch Village Road  
 Halifax, N.S. B3N 2T1  
 B3K 3B7  
 Tel: (902) 457-9622  
 Fax: (902) 457-0386

- Services offered:**
- ❖ School Support Program
  - ❖ Conversation Groups
  - ❖ Individual Host Matches
  - ❖ Social Activities
  - ❖ Volunteer Recruitment and Training
  - ❖ Public Education
  - ❖ Youth

**Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA)**  
 2131 Gottingen Street, Suite 200  
 Hfx. N.S. B3K 5Z7  
 Tel: (902) 423-3607  
 Fax: (902) 423-3154

- Services offered::**
- ❖ Employment Counselling Services
  - ❖ Settlement and Orientation Services
  - ❖ Community Participation
  - ❖ Immigrant Entrepreneur Orientation Program
  - ❖ Family Violence Awareness Program
  - ❖ Outreach Crisis Services
  - ❖ Language Assessment (CLBA)
  - ❖ Volunteer Services Unit include:
    - New Friends (Host)
    - Interpretation and Translation
    - Volunteer Tutors

concern when looking at increasing immigration. Marketing, selection, assessment, accreditation, and settlement all have costs associated with them. Fortunately, the resources to cover these costs already exist - an effective immigration strategy needs to identify and share them appropriately among the various stakeholders.

At present, the federal government supplies the majority of funding for immigration services in Canada. According to existing federal formulas, as immigrant numbers rise, the funds available to the province of destination will also increase. An effective immigration policy would result in higher numbers of immigrants to Nova Scotia and allow us to maximize our proportional share of the available federal funds. Similarly, a majority of the costs for attracting and processing immigrants also rests with the federal government, and again, represent committed spending from which Nova Scotia has not been achieving the maximum return because of our falling immigration numbers.

Immigrants themselves also pick up many of the additional processing costs, and there are further opportunities to explore cost recovery in the delivery of a broad scope of settlement services. Furthermore, immigrants, and the wider immigrant community, also represent a substantial volunteer resource to supply and prepare the information and marketing tools necessary to attract, and then to meet the needs of, further immigrants.

Despite the fact that the majority of the costs for immigration are borne elsewhere, it may still be necessary for the province to re-allocate some existing resources to a focused immigration initiative on an as needed basis. A first step would be to focus current expenditures into a single agency. This would enable more targeted expenditures towards a clear set of objectives. The use of partnerships with the immigrant community and the private sector, as well as creative application of new technologies and improved use of the Internet will allow the province to further leverage their current and any re-allocated investment.

Focusing resources would also allow for a **clarification of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities**. As has already been discussed, there are a large number of support services and provincial, federal and municipal governments involved in supporting and promoting immigration. A single agency needs to take the lead on this issue to co-ordinate both the delivery of services and the allocation of resources among those services to ensure that we, as a community, achieve the greatest possible return.

At present, the provincial Department of Education has the lead on issues of immigration policy while the Department of Economic Development manages the issues surrounding business immigrants. This relationship needs to be reviewed. Immigration, by its very nature, is an exercise in growth and economic development. Any immigration policy should be drafted and administered in this context by those responsible for economic development. The Education Department has a role in supplying support services that help facilitate the swift and effective integration of immigrants into their communities. Economic Development needs to have the lead in developing the policies to maximize the return from immigration as a tool for growth and coordinating both efforts to attract and then services to integrate immigrants into Nova Scotia.

The challenge of having **international qualifications assessed and recognized** in Canada is another significant problem facing newcomers in both the professions and the trades. The

problem is exacerbated by the fact that portability of credentials even across provinces is not well established. There is a growing recognition of these issues at a national level, but accreditation of international credentials remains the primary responsibility of provincial professional associations, each of which develops its own process and requirements.

Historically, in some professions there has been supply and demand at work. The requirements of the local professional association may be simplified in times of higher demand. In times of lower demand, even after investing much time and money and obtaining accreditation, an immigrant professional may not find work in his/her field.

While clear, fair and open processes for assessing and recognizing international credentials need to be in place, recent labour market shortages in regulated professions such as medicine, pharmacy and teaching, have been an impetus for change. Professional associations are realizing that ***there is a pool of untapped expertise represented by internationally trained professionals.***

At this point, a major barrier to accreditation of immigrant professionals is the challenge of accessing and assessing information regarding training programs in other countries. Where training is done in English and records are kept in a style familiar to those used in Canada, assessment is fairly straightforward. Usually fees are applied to this process and often examinations are required.

In countries where English is not the first language and university or college records may be less detailed or less descriptive than those in Canada, the process requires more time and effort. Other factors may include how recently the person graduated, how easy it is to obtain records at long distance, and how much the local association knows about its profession in the country of origin.

In some fields, such as engineering, a reasonable process is in place, in others, steps are just now being taken to develop more equitable means of assessing international training and experience. Efforts in this direction need to be encouraged and sustained for all too often, the stereotype of a dentist working as restaurant cleaner is an unfortunate reality. This type of situation is a serious misuse of human resources in our province and a waste of skills, knowledge and expertise.

In the area of skilled trades, the issues differ somewhat. Their training records may be even more difficult to obtain and assess. It may be possible for skilled tradespeople to do modified exams, as they do not need a high level of English language skills to do their work well. Such adjustments seem to be done on an ad-hoc basis.

Some progress has been made in the recognition of training and experience in the skilled trades, but improvements are required here as well. Newcomer tradespeople may be able to challenge the required exams, but the standard format of a multiple choice test, often makes success very unlikely. The possibility of a temporary permit to work in a mandatory trade can also open up opportunities for both the individual trades person and local employers. Predicted shortages in the skilled trades could be addressed by recruiting and attracting more skilled workers from outside Canada.

While progress has been made in both the professions and skilled trades, there is room for much better information for prospective immigrants and for work on developing effective and timely systems for accreditation, beginning with the areas of highest demand.

Finally, **concerns about the negative impacts of immigration** have been extensively studied. In July 2000, the OECD released a study drawing together the work in this area and discussing the trends and impacts of immigration across the globe. In it, the author identifies three key issues at the heart of opposition to increased immigration. It is argued by opponents that immigrants:

- 1) have a negative impact on the local labour market (lower wages, increased unemployment, increased competition for "local" jobs)
- 2) exacerbate existing social problems (increased low cost housing, more crime)
- 3) are an increased fiscal burden (through welfare, health and education costs)

After reviewing the experience in over 30 countries, including Canada and the United States, the author reached the following conclusions:

- 1) There is "no obvious relationship between immigration and unemployment". Historically, immigrants have typically filled lower paying jobs in sectors which "the native population does not seem interested in, such as farm labourers, household workers, (and) certain occupations in the hospitality industry." Immigrants create a demand for goods spurring economic growth and job creation, form a flexible reserve of workers that, in part, compensates for the low mobility of the native born population and often fill skills gaps in the host economy.

In fact, in Canada "skilled workers accounted for about half the total number of immigrants in 1997, compared with about 1/5 at the beginning of the decade." Most recently these have been "very skilled people in sectors where labour shortages are evident, such as technicians and engineers in the information, communication and technology producing and using industries."

- 2) "Local crime rates are independent of changes in immigrant shares in the community and imprisonment rates are typically lower for foreigners." Furthermore, the budgetary impact of immigrants (the cost increases for health, education and social welfare) are tied more directly to the "human capital possessed by the average immigrant" and the level of "public infrastructure and ...social planning" present in a given country rather than to immigration per se.

In other words, drawing a balance of skilled and unskilled workers into a system designed to facilitate their entry into the workforce maximizes their net return to the economy and ensures that they benefit themselves and their new neighbours to the greatest possible extent.

- 3) While the economic impact of immigration varies by time and place the majority of studies suggest that immigration results in a net gain to the host country. One study

recorded a net gain to the GDP of the United States of \$10 billion per year from immigration.

The message seems clear, a well thought out immigration policy that balances the introduction of skilled and unskilled workers with systems to support their introduction into the workforce will result in a net economic benefit and the ability to improve overall quality of life for the native population as well as the new arrivals.

## **KEY PIECES OF A NEW IMMIGRATION POLICY FOR NOVA SCOTIA**

**Immigrants of various categories** will continue to come to Nova Scotia. Any provincial immigration policy must include all categories of immigrants. Those who come under the family and refugee categories also bring skills, coupled with survival instincts and great determination, which will be assets to the community. In addition, they become part of the ethnic groups in the community, which will attract more of their compatriots and support further contributions to the economic and social expansion of Nova Scotia.

Any newcomer, regardless of their category, will require **support to adjust and settle** in their new home. Good planning will minimize the social and economic costs for both the immigrant and the welcoming community. If the province decides to increase the numbers of skilled and business category immigrants, it will have to ensure that there are appropriate services available to new immigrants in those categories.

“Even well prepared and highly skilled newcomers may need some assistance during settlement. When support services are in place, integration will be a smoother process. Strategic planning ...would see proactive needs assessments followed by timely service delivery through partnerships.” (MISA submission to Nova Scotia Department of Economic Development, August 2000).

**Clear and practical information** must be available to prospective immigrants overseas to facilitate good self-selection, increase the success of the settlement process and decrease secondary migration. A major concern voiced by immigrants to Nova Scotia is that they did not receive adequate and accurate information before their arrival. Coming ill-prepared has led many people to decide not to remain here. Immigrants need to know about lifestyle, the labour market, education systems, etc. when they are preparing to come to Nova Scotia. The Internet now provides unprecedented opportunities to inform people of the realities of life in Nova Scotia. Other means of transmitting information may be worked out through Canadian government offices overseas. Good information will decrease culture shock and will mean that immigrants are better prepared when they arrive.

**Public education** about the contributions and needs of newcomers is also important. Just as immigrants need to be oriented to life in Nova Scotia, so Nova Scotians need to be oriented to relating to newcomers of diverse backgrounds. Integration is a two-way street and will involve significant adaptation on the part of the local community also. If we want our province to grow, we must accept some change at every level: political, economic and personal.

The benefits of immigration will be maximized when welcoming and supporting immigrants to settle is seen as the responsibility of the whole community and not only immigrant serving agencies.

## **NEW MODELS FOR FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL COOPERATION ON IMMIGRATION**

While immigration has declined on a national level, several other provinces have been moving to increase their immigration numbers but not, as of yet, Nova Scotia. It is time for this province to consider a provincial nominee program, such as those agreed upon by New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Quebec (British Columbia is in the final stages of preparing its nominee program).

Each of these provinces has signed a multi-year agreement with the federal government, under which the province will select a certain number of immigrants in keeping with its policies and plans for development. While each province has chosen to focus on a different aspect of this process, the agreements are all intended to increase the economic benefits of immigration to these provinces.

Manitoba, with approximately the same population as Nova Scotia, has signed on to welcome 200 nominees per year for four years. New Brunswick has agreed to the same numbers and time frame. In each agreement, it is stated that the province “will provide a nomination strategy to the federal government to identify target markets and potential source countries and regions.” The federal government retains the responsibility of screening the nominees using its security, criminal and medical checks.

For British Columbia and Manitoba the provincial nominee programs are logical steps following on their earlier agreements to accept responsibility for immigrant settlement services. In 1996 the department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada initiated a process to devolve its role in administering immigrant settlement services to the provinces. BC and Manitoba accepted this offer and now manage their services for immigrants. In those provinces, as in Quebec and Ontario, immigration has a clear place in the provincial government – a division or department or secretariat.

In Nova Scotia the responsibility has rested mainly with the Department of Education, with some involvement from Economic Development, Community Services, Health and Justice. Nova Scotia decided not to take on the administration of immigrant services in this province.

## **CONCLUSION**

Immigration promises tremendous potential benefits but requires a collective and focused effort as part of an overall immigration strategy. An aggressive marketing plan involving all interested stakeholders and a well-developed provincial nominee program will be important parts of this strategy. Support services and public education programs are also essential to

the success of an immigration strategy. Early and effective economic integration will maximize the benefits of immigration and ensure that those who come - stay.

In the current fiscal context, Nova Scotia needs to maximize immigration as an economic development tool without affecting the provincial bottom line. A coordinated and integrated immigration policy must be founded on an aggressive re-adjustment of current provincial spending, more effective use of existing federal funds, and be leveraged by the resources of key stakeholders in the private sector and the immigrants themselves.

The situation is clear: Nova Scotia has the resources to support an increase in immigration but if we fail to achieve that increase we will see those resources deteriorate. Nova Scotia needs an immigration strategy, which will be a coordinated effort to attract newcomers who will increase our population growth, contribute skills, experience and perspectives that will enrich our communities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce recommends that the Province of Nova Scotia:

- 1) Bring together stakeholders to act on Voluntary Planning's recommendation and "immediately develop an immigration policy and action plan and work with Ottawa to attract our proportionate share of newcomers."
- 2) 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 attracting and integrating immigrants into the Nova Scotia economy
  - ▶ maximize the effectiveness of current provincial spending through a focus on partnership and co-ordination
  - ▶ make the most effective use of federal funds already available to support economic development, growth and immigration
- 3) Clarify roles and accountabilities for immigration by:
  - ▶ placing responsibility for immigration within the Economic Development Department
  - ▶ identifying partnerships to support an immigration policy
  - ▶ developing a process whereby all interested stakeholder groups have input into the provincial immigration strategy on an ongoing basis.
  - ▶ supporting the creation of an informal and voluntary Immigration Council comprising representatives of the stakeholders who can then input into the planning, and assist with the implementation, of a provincial immigration strategy.
- 4) Adopt a provincial nominee program that reflects the experience and lessons learned by other provinces. Some of the key pieces of this program should be:

- ▶ A fixed target of nominees - 200 seems like an appropriate number and one that has worked for Manitoba and New Brunswick.
  - ▶ 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 Scotian economy.
  - ▶ A clear determination of the sectors, occupations or skill sets that are in short supply - Manitoba has done a good job in this area with a clear and detailed list of shortages readily available on-line.
  - ▶ An application process that includes a self-assessment form. The Saskatchewan form is a model worth considering.
  - ▶ A user-friendly website with relevant and easily accessible information. Quebec has made a solid effort in this area.
- 5) 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
  - ▶ supports to help immigrants adjust and settle into their new communities
  - ▶ public education about the benefits and challenges of a successful immigration policy
  - ▶ continued improvements in accreditation of international qualifications in professions and skilled trades

## **APPENDIX 1**

### Authors

This Report was authored by the Immigration Sub-committee of the Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce's International Business Committee. The Sub-committee members were:

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## APPENDIX 2

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