



BRIEF TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

October 12, 2017

**Submitted by: Janet Moser (Director), Monique Hong (Program Coordinator), on behalf of:
The Fredericton Chamber of Commerce**

Executive Summary

Established in 1874, the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce is proud to be an award-winning organization that continually strives to meet and exceed the needs of our members. With nearly 1,000 members, the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce represents a significant portion of the business population in Fredericton and is New Brunswick's largest chamber of commerce.

The Fredericton Chamber of Commerce has undertaken three programs to attract and retain business immigrants to New Brunswick, is pleased to submit a brief to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, on the topic of attracting newcomers and retaining current residents of our province.

We propose the following recommendations in response to [the motion](#) put forth by Alaina Lockhart, MP (Fundy Royal).

1. Facilitate access to newcomer immigrants.

Standardize meeting protocols with new arrival immigrants. Early access to new immigrants will allow service providers to setup meetings with business consultants, to introduce programs, and aid stakeholders in making business investments and other arrangements that will be long-lasting.

2. Fund newcomer immigrant networking.

Our program participants have reported that they met their first Canadian friends through our networking events - increasing their likelihood of staying in New Brunswick. Continued funding would allow the Fredericton Chamber to work with individuals who are struggling to settle in New Brunswick.

3. Promote city growth.

Immigrants report that they would like to see growth and investment in infrastructure. Newcomers also continue to support increased access to more flights and other travel options.

4. Remove barriers to doing business in New Brunswick.

Immigrants and banking representatives have reported to us that in attempting to start a business in New Brunswick, the process is often stymied or otherwise negatively impacted by the cumbersome banking system and the regulations put on new immigrants.

5. Fund data collection.

With additional funding, it would be possible for our organization to create a database of client records, complete with reasons why they have chosen to stay or leave New Brunswick. In addition to in-house use, this could also become a valuable source of qualitative data for immigration researchers and other jurisdictions with similar challenges.

6. Integrate existing resources.

Immigrants report that their first point of contact when deciding to move to Canada is typically the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada website (cic.gc.ca). They report that information on that website is not readily available, difficult to find, or poorly organized. Our recommendation is that resources be integrated to better facilitate the process of selecting a landing spot through easily accessible information on the CIC website. We recommend that a database be integrated into the website, with information on pre-arrival, landing, settlement, and business development tool kits for the entrepreneurial class, as well as employment and accreditation information.

7. Support language training.

We recommend that the province invest in English-language training, prioritizing individuals who wish to enter the workforce. While such programs already exist, there is a need to prioritize and support these programs, due to the steadily increasing number of immigrants whose first language is something other than English or French.

8. Increase intercultural awareness and sensitivity.

Our recommendation is that intercultural awareness and sensitivity training be made widely available to government staff and business professionals, especially those working in the areas of talent acquisition, consulting, and banking – all of which are major points of first contact for immigrants. We also expect steady attendance from new immigrants, through our Business Immigrant Mentorship Program (BIMP).

About the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce

The Fredericton Chamber of Commerce is New Brunswick's largest Chamber of Commerce and the proud host of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's 2017 annual general meeting (AGM) and conference. With nearly 1,000 members, our Chamber represents a significant portion of the business population in Fredericton.

We provide a platform for businesses to voice their concerns, including New Canadian investors, who may otherwise lack the means to join and participate in our business community. Since 2009, the Fredericton Chamber has supported economic growth and prosperity, through our immigration programming. We now run three programs, directed at attracting and retaining immigrant residents and businesses: ***The Business Immigrant***

Mentorship Program (BIMP), now entering Cohort 18; ***The Hive Incubator***; and ***Succession Connect***.

We thank Matt DeCourcey's office for the invitation to submit a brief, discussing our findings and recommendations. We also thank the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), the Province of New Brunswick, and the City of Fredericton for their continued support of our programming.

i) The challenges associated with an aging population and shrinking population base.

New Brunswick's population is aging and the province is facing the unique challenge of experiencing, "patterns of migration [that] are more pronounced" and a population that is aging faster than other Maritime Provinces.¹ One of the challenges identified by our team is the lack of succession planning by New Brunswick business owners. Our response to this challenge was the development of the Succession Connect program. Through this program, we act as a liaison between immigrant investors and retiring business owners. We offer various services, such as meetings with our Succession Connect Specialist, as well as referrals to legal, accounting and banking services. We operate under the guidance of an advisory committee, ensuring quality in our service provision.

Recommendations:

1. Facilitate access to newcomer immigrants.

Through the launch of the program and through meeting with dozens of interested investors, we have found that coordination is more successful when both buyer and seller are able to act quickly and as expeditiously as possible, to consummate the business investment decision in a timely manner.

We are better able to connect interested newcomer immigrants with businesses for sale, when we meet with them as early as possible in the immigration process. Immigrants are searching within a two-year deadline to fulfill the requirements of the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) and have expressed that they are pressed for time and more likely to make poor business choices as a result. Early access to immigrants will allow us to set up meetings with our business consultants, to introduce our programs, and aid stakeholders in making business investments and other arrangements that will be longer-lasting.

ii) Retention of current residents and the challenges of retaining new immigrants.

New Brunswick's net inter-provincial migration fluctuated over the past several decades; however, overall it remains consistently lower than in 1971.² New data suggests that in the last

¹ Peters, Paul A. (2017). New Brunswick Population Snapshot (Report No. 2017-01). Fredericton, NB: New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data and Training (NB-IRDT).

² Ibid.

two years, net inter-provincial migration has increased in New Brunswick.³ According to the latest population estimates released in September 2017 by Statistics Canada, New Brunswick has added 5,711 people over the last two years, this includes both immigrants and inter-provincial migrants. This is a modest increase, but represents a significant improvement over the three previous years, which saw steady population declines in the province.⁴

It is therefore important to maintain and capitalize on this momentum of net immigration. Participants of our chamber's immigration programs told us that, as new immigrants, they are struggling to raise families, rebuild their social lives, and adjust to the new environment. The Fredericton Chamber of Commerce has been their steady helping hands, with the sole objective to ensure that their adjustments would not be so onerous and overwhelming that they, having no other methods of coping, decide to pull up their newly established roots here in New Brunswick and consider moving to other Canadian provinces. The relationship between economic growth and population growth is one that is symbiotic. Prosperity leads to retention because it allows families to build a proper foundation and feel secure in their new homes.

Recommendations:

1. Fund newcomer immigrant networking

Continue to support programs such as the Business Immigrant Mentorship Program (BIMP). As part of the BIMP program, we host a weekly networking event, Coffee Chat, which provides a welcoming atmosphere to newcomer immigrants. Guests from the federal and provincial governments, the City of Fredericton, and local businesses have joined us for discussions on owning and operating a business in New Brunswick, economic growth in Fredericton, etc. Newcomers report that they feel included in the decision-making process. Guests have reported that they met their first Canadian friends through our networking events. Newcomers report that making Canadian friends early on greatly increases their likelihood of staying in New Brunswick.

2. Promote city growth

Immigrants report that they would like to see growth, such as through the expansion of community zones and markets (infrastructure). Newcomers also continue to support increased access to more flights and other travel options. New airlines and additional flights in and out of Fredericton would help encourage our new business immigrants to stay in Fredericton. Furthermore, some newcomers will become ambassadors for their new community - reporting back to other potential investors in their home countries about the ease of doing business and managing business related travel in New Brunswick, and in Fredericton in particular.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Jones, Robert. (2017). New Brunswickers leaving Alberta help fuel population bump. Available from: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/new-brunswick-population-increase-west-1.4316987>

Many immigrant households are following different family structures. Often, we meet families comprised of a male head of household, a stay-at-home mother, and one or more children. Many times, the male heads of household report that their wives feel isolated. They would like to see investment in community infrastructure for children’s programming; marketplaces; etc.

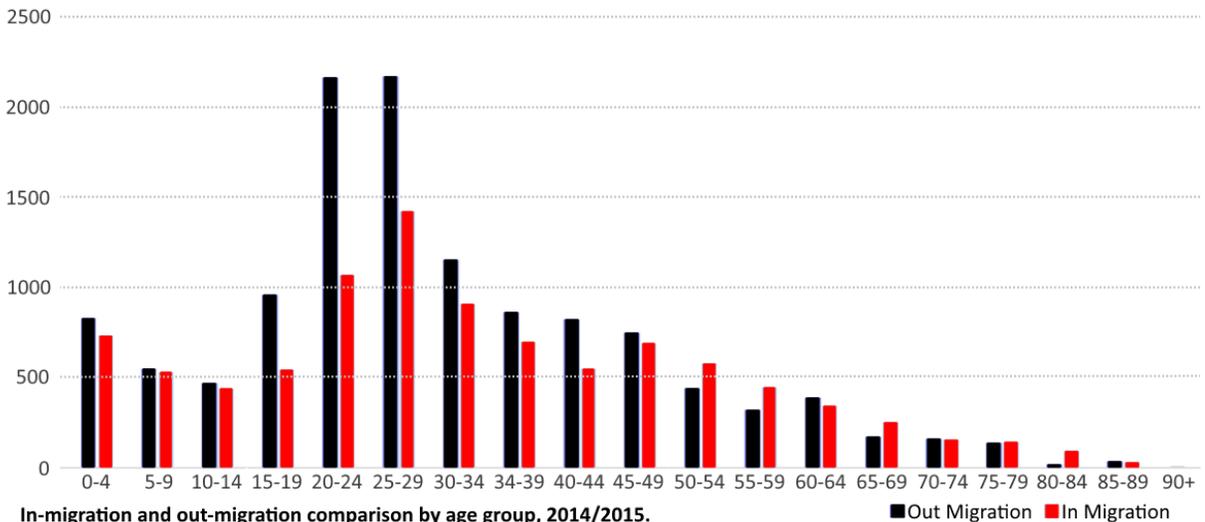
3. Remove barriers to doing business in New Brunswick

Immigrants and banking representatives have reported that in attempting to start a business in New Brunswick, the process is often stymied or otherwise negatively impacted by the cumbersome banking system and the regulations put on new immigrants. For example, new immigrants start their new lives with no credit rating and little chance of being approved for loans, credit cards, mortgages, etc. When the head of household (often male) faces difficulty in helping his family members feel settled, he is often more likely to seek opportunities in other provinces.

iii) Possible recommendations on how to increase immigration to the region.

When the New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data and Training (NB-IRDT) used data from Statistics Canada to chart inter-provincial in-migration and out-migration by age group, it was observed that from 2014 to 2015, out-migration was the highest for individuals ages 20 to 29 (Graph 1). This was not the case from 2010 to 2011, when in-migration was higher than out-migration for individuals ages 20 to 29; however, the report lacks insight into this drastic conversion - another example of the challenges faced by professionals working directly with immigrants, refugees, and interprovincial migrants who lack the resources to collect the vital data needed to make sense of these numbers.

Graph 1: Inter-Provincial In-Migration and Out-Migration by Age Group, 2014 to 2015



Source: Fig. 12, New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data and Training (Report No. 2017-01).
 Using data from Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 051-0004.

Recommendations:

1. Fund data collection

The lack of retention data is a challenge recognized by professionals in the field of immigration research. As noted by the New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data and Training (NB-IRDT), “The Provincial government does not have direct access to personal information on who lands in NB and who stays in NB.”⁵ Our contacts within the provincial government suggest that in the future, the province may be working with the NB-IRDT to update retention numbers - building on previously collected data using Longitudinal Immigrant Database (IMDB) statistics - including a longitudinal study on the Syrian refugee cohort.

Through our three immigrations programs, we have gathered some data and we have access to general information on why immigrants are not staying in New Brunswick. Our knowledge and ability to act would be greatly enhanced if we had the capability to collect a larger amount of data, as well as more accurate data. With additional funding, our staff would be able to conduct more thorough analyses of why newcomers are choosing to relocate to outside provinces.

Previous data that was collected has not been integrated with the current BIMP cohort. However, with additional funding, it would be possible for our organization to create a database of client records, complete with reasons why they have chosen to stay or leave New Brunswick. In addition to in-house use, this could also become a valuable source of qualitative data for immigration researchers and other jurisdictions with similar challenges.

2. Integrate existing resources

Immigrants report that their first point of contact when deciding to move to Canada is typically the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada website (cic.gc.ca). They report that information on that website is not readily available, difficult to find, or poorly organized. Many resources, such as those offered by our three immigration programs and our community partners are easily overlooked. They found that many organizations would redirect them to partner websites, only for that website to direct them to yet another website. Another challenge is that new immigrants are often unaware of the difficulties they will face in gaining accreditation and recognition of existing education and training. Currently, province-specific information has not been integrated into the website and most credentials are on a provincial basis.

Our recommendation is that resources be integrated to better facilitate the process of selecting a landing spot through easily accessible information on the CIC website. We recommend that a database be integrated into the website, with information on pre-

⁵ New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data and Training (NB-IRDT). (2015). Retention of newcomers in New Brunswick: A quantitative analysis using provincial administrative data. Available from: http://www.unb.ca/fredericton/arts/nbirdt/_resources/pdfs/petl-may18-paper-3.pdf

arrival, landing, settlement, and business development tool kits for the entrepreneurial class, as well as employment and accreditation information. Information on the economy, local and provincial updates, links to resources and service providers, and a messenger system for inquiries could be included as well.

iv) Analysis of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot initiatives associated with the Atlantic Growth Strategy.

On September 11 and 12 2017, the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce sponsored a job fair for newcomer immigrants and international students. We believe that attracting and retaining talent is crucial for business owners in Fredericton. Business owners report that they are interested in attracting skilled employees more than 45 New Brunswick employers took part in the job fair.

Recommendations:

1. Support language training

New population projections developed at Statistics Canada show that in continuing with current immigration trends, more than one-quarter of the population in 2036 could potentially have a mother tongue other than English or French.⁶

In our experience, a large portion of our client base is comprised of Mandarin-speaking and Arabic-speaking individuals. New immigrants are coming to us with numerous skills and qualifications; however, many are challenged by their insufficient English-language proficiency, making it hard to do business. This will continue to be the case for the next three years, until the recent changes to the language requirements of the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) catch up with the stream of arriving immigrants. Until that point, we will be working with many individuals who were approved under the low selection criteria, a challenge experienced by all professionals working in immigration and recognized by the Conference Board of Canada in their recent report.⁷

We have helped and supported these immigrants in some cases. In other cases, we have had to direct them to outside organizations, due to the limited scope of our mandate. Our community partners at Ignite Fredericton and The Ville Cooperative have told us that they would like to do more to help immigrants and refugees, but they are having to direct individuals (especially refugees) to the Multicultural Association (MCAF), which is inundated with requests for assistance. We recommend that the province invest in English language training, prioritizing individuals who wish to enter the workforce.

2. Increase intercultural awareness and sensitivity.

⁶ Statistics Canada. (2017). Study: A look at immigration, ethnocultural diversity and languages in Canada up to 2036, 2011 to 2036. Available from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170125/dq170125b-eng.htm>

⁷ El-Assal, Kareem, and Sam Goucher. (2017). Immigration to Atlantic Canada: Toward a Prosperous Future. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada.

Immigrant investors have revealed that they often feel a level of distrust coming from locals. In response, we hired an outside organization, Diversis, to conduct two workshops on cultural awareness – one for immigrants and one for local business professionals. The results were revealing: Many new immigrants were previously unaware of several cultural norms that can often be taken for granted, such as timeliness, expectations regarding physical contact, eye contact, etc. Local participants, including government representatives, were made aware of ways to communicate effectively with individuals from other countries.

Our recommendation is that intercultural awareness and sensitivity training be made widely available to government staff and business professionals, especially those working in the areas of talent acquisition, consulting, and banking – all of which are major points of first contact for immigrants. We also expect steady attendance from new immigrants, through our Business Immigrant Mentorship Program (BIMP).