Dynamics of Citizenship and Identity: Obstacles to Sustainable Immigration in a Small Canadian City

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Abstract. This article examines some of the challenges confronting immigrants in Prince George, a small city in the province of British Columbia, Canada, and evaluates the responses of local agencies to the diverse needs of newcomers. Specifically, it will explore the effects of the current economic restructuring and the lack of coordination among public employment, housing, education, and health agencies and private agencies such as churches. Shortfalls in the quality and effectiveness of the delivery of essential services to immigrants, particularly those who do not speak English or French, have affected immigrants' sense of belonging, patterns of settlement, and negotiation of new identities in the community.

Keywords: *Canada, citizenship, migrants, multiculturalism, nationalism, new identities*

Introduction

In recent years, scholars, activists, and policy makers have raised concerns about social and economic decline resulting from the concentration of immigrants in large Canadian cities such as Vancouver and Toronto. This issue arises at a time when regions across Canada are undergoing a series of economic restructurings and when migration to resource-based small cities such as Prince George (British Columbia) is declining. Although attempts have been made to promote settlement in small cities, there has been limited research into settlement patterns of immigrants in small urban centers and strategies used by municipal authorities to attract and retain immigrants. To help fill this gap, this study examines the challenges confronting immigrants in Prince George, a small city in northern British Columbia, and evaluates the responses of local agencies to the diverse needs of newcomers. Specifically, I explore the effects of the current social and economic restructuring and the lack of coordination among public employment, housing, education, and health agencies as well as private agencies such as churches. This

research contributes to the ongoing discussion among researchers, policy makers, and stakeholders regarding issues of immigrants' access to critical social services and the lack of coordination between public and private agencies in small Canadian centers.

I use textual analysis methods to analyze various forms of texts (e.g., public announcements and population statistics) produced by the provincial government of British Columbia. In addition, I use scholarly literature to supplement the information contained in these texts. To discuss issues of citizenship, identity, belonging, and Canadian immigration, I draw from theories in political studies, geography, and anthropology. I discuss three prominent current theories from political studies concerning citizenship—liberal, republican, and communitarian— and explore their limitations and possibilities with regard to theorizing about identity, citizenship, and belonging. Within this discussion, I explain the need for a new conceptualization of citizenship centering on the ways groups construct their belonging and the fluidity of group identities within the contexts of globalization and transnationalism. I also draw on the geographical theory of politics of space to discuss immigration processes, immigration policies, and the effects these have on shaping settlement patterns of immigrants in small Canadian cities. This combined approach allows me to examine the challenges that immigrants experience in small Canadian cities, the implications of these challenges for individuals' and groups' sense of belonging, and the limitations that exist in the strategies used by policy makers at the municipal level to attract and retain immigrants.

I argue that shortfalls in the quality and effectiveness of the delivery of essential services to immigrants, particularly those who do not speak English or French, have affected immigrants' sense of belonging, patterns of settlement, and negotiation of new identities in the community of Prince George.

Background

Although migration is not a recent phenomenon, its causes and effects are increasingly linked to the globalization processes. Since the end of the Cold War, individuals and groups in various parts of the world have been motivated to emigrate out of their homelands by violent conflicts, shifts in geopolitical relations, and the expansion of trade and production that cut across nation-states' boundaries. The decision to migrate is multifaceted, and migration can be either

voluntary or forced. Voluntary migration involves the decision to leave one's home in search of better economic opportunities or to reunite with family abroad. Involuntary or forced migration takes place when circumstances such as war or environmental degradation force individuals to abandon their homes. Migration can also be long term or short term. Long-term migration involves crossing national borders and establishing permanent settlement in a different state. Short-term or temporary migration applies to guest workers, seasonal workers, and students.[1]

International migrants contribute significantly to the growing global labor force. In an effort to identify those who cross their national borders, states create various categories for migrants, such as visitors and migrant workers. However, these categories often misconstrue the reality of those who cross states' borders. For example, tourists may enter a country and decide to stay to search for employment, and refugees or asylum seekers who leave their country for political reasons may choose to migrate to a specific country in search of employment opportunities or to reunite with their families.[2] Under these circumstances, individuals and groups forge their identities and political membership from multiple locations.

One of the challenges experienced by contemporary states is controlling migration flows. Failure to control territorial boundaries can pose serious threats to national security and challenges to the country's leadership. Therefore states adjust their immigration policies in the interests of securing their territorial borders. Mass flows of migration also create pressures on state governments, particularly those who do not have the capacity to accommodate large influxes of international migrants. If a state does not have the capacity to provide essential public services such as health care and housing for large numbers of migrants in addition to its citizens, this limitation can cause tensions between groups and individuals, as well as competition for limited resources such as goods and employment.[3]

The reading and interpretation of government documents in this project are situated within the context of dominant meanings of nationalism and multiculturalism in Canada. The majority of written texts used in this project are population statistics and documents published by the federal, provincial, and

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1 Fiona B. Adamson, "Crossing Borders: International Migration and National Security," International Security 31, no. 1 (2006): 165–99.
2 Adamson, "Crossing Borders."
3 Ibid.

municipal governments. Together, these sources are important for addressing the issues of immigrants' access to public services (e.g., language training, housing, and health care) and how government public policies—including immigration policies— influence immigrants' settlement patterns. The government documents are available online. Using supplemental information from scholarly literature, I apply textual and spatial analysis to examine the official texts. Textual analysis involves the reading and analyzing of texts to discover groups' ideological practices. This method is useful in uncovering how institutional knowledge is formed through the creation and legitimizing of categories (e.g., immigrant and citizen) within a state. In this project I also use spatial analysis, which is effective for examining settlement patterns and economic performance of immigrants in cities on a regional scale.

Theorizing Citizenship

State immigration policies are designed around two main goals: determining who can enter the country and who can become state members. Each nation-state develops its own elaborate rules and regulations for those the state recognizes as its citizens and for those who are immigrants. State membership, also known as citizenship, is perceived by scholars as a collection of economic and cultural practices as well as political and civil rights and duties that delineate an individual membership within the specific polity.[4] Because citizenship is both a practice and a status, it cannot be viewed as a

> purely sociological concept nor purely legal concept but a relationship between the two. . . . While, then, citizenship can be defined as a legal and political status, from a sociological point of view it can be defined as competent membership in a polity, thus emphasizing the constitute aspect of citizenship.[5]

By this definition, those who do not possess political and social rights are considered noncitizens of the state and are thereby excluded from exercising these

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[4] Alan C. Cairns, "Introduction," in *Citizenship, Diversity and Pluralism: Canadian and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Alan C. Cairns et al. (Montreal: Queens-McGill University Press, 1999), 3–22; Engin Fahri Isin and Patricia K. Wood, "Redistribution, Recognition, and Representation," in *Citizenship and Identity*, ed. Engin Fahri and Patricia K. Wood (London: Sage, 1999), 1–24; Yvonne M. Hébert and Lori A. Wilkinson, "The Citizenship Debates: Conceptual, Policy, Experiential, and Educational Issues," in *Citizenship in Transformation in Canada*, ed. Yvonne M. Hébert (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 3–36; David Miller, Citizenship and National Identity (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).
[5] Isin and Wood, "Redistribution," 4.

rights. The exclusion from rights not only has important implications on relations between those who identify themselves as citizens and those who are noncitizens or migrants, it also shapes migrants' sense of belonging to the state or nation.

A discussion of concepts of identity and citizenship must make reference to the specific location and to historical and cultural contexts. Citizenship continues to be a popular topic of debate among scholars and policy makers. In particular, citizenship is one of the important cultural and political identity markers that serve to differentiate members from nonmembers within the specific nation-state. According to previous scholars (such as Max Weber) who held Eurocentric and imperialistic views, the idea of citizenship originated in the West and did not exist in non-Western societies.[6] More recently, scholars have pointed out that throughout history, societies around the world have different ways of recognizing political membership and status and thereby construct their own definition of citizenship.[7] In addition to problematizing the Eurocentric and imperialistic tendency of earlier theories of citizenship, these scholars also contend that individuals and groups within specific places engage in struggles and conflicts for the right to claim citizenship. In doing so, these scholars succeeded in challenging the universalistic and Western view of citizenship held by previous theorists, and they challenge us to rethink the concept of citizenship as fluid and multidimensional.

Currently, three prominent theories aid in understanding the concept of citizenship: liberalism, communitarianism, and civic republicanism. The liberal view considers the individual to be a polity and regards citizenship as a set of specific rights granted to the individual by the nation-state. The individual has the right to choose when and whether to exercise this right. Critics argue that the liberal definition of citizenship has a limited conception of group rights.[8]

Alternatively, communitarianism emphasizes the notion of community and seeks to situate the individual within the collective. Although communitarianism does not reject the liberal conceptualization of individual rights, it stresses the importance of individual rights within the context of group interests, as the

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[6] Isin and Wood, "Redistribution."

[7] Cairns, "Introduction"; Isin and Wood, "Redistribution"; Miller, "Citizenship"; Hébert and Wilkinson, "Citizenship Debates."

[8] Cairns, "Introduction"; Isin and Wood, "Redistribution"; Miller, "Citizenship"; Hébert and Wilkinson, "Citizenship Debates."

individual is not isolated from his or her community.[9] Critics of communitarianism argue that the theory is limited, as individual loyalties and obligations toward the group are taken for granted.[10]

Unlike liberalism and communitarianism, republicanism privileges neither the individual nor the community. Instead, it places a strong emphasis on the idea of "civic identity," which is shared by all citizens in the pursuit of common interests and does not compromise individual goals. According to the republican model, participation in political forums should be based on a common identity as citizens. In the decision-making process, differences among people should be disallowed and competing views resolved in accordance with the overarching goals of justice and common interests.[11] Advocates of the politics of recognition have criticized the republican universal model because it assumes a singular and unitary political community and fails to recognize that the concept of citizenship is contested between dominant and marginalized groups. Furthermore, the guidelines existing in the republican model only benefit the interests of the dominant groups and therefore fail to address contemporary issues of discrimination and oppression.[12] These critics also doubt that groups will be willing to set aside their specific identities in order take part in political debates that assume that citizens have a homogeneous identity.

The politics of recognition seeks to offer new ways of theorizing citizenship. Advocates of this emerging theory argue for a new model of citizenship that will challenge dominant cultural values and interests, provide equal opportunities for all groups to participate in the political realm, and legitimize differences among groups. The new model would also emphasize the redistribution of interests that favor groups identifying as marginalized or oppressed, such as immigrants and women.[13] In addition, policies would be based on decision-making discussions and would take into account group differences and how the policies would affect groups that are on society's margins.[14] As David Miller points out, "Equal treatment will not be enough in circumstances where different groups are very unequally

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[9] Isin and Wood, "Redistribution"; Miller, "Citizenship."

[10] Isin and Wood, "Redistribution."

[11] Isin and Wood, "Redistribution"; Miller, "Citizenship."

[12] Isin and Wood, "Redistribution."

[13] Ibid.

[14] Cairns, "Introduction"; Isin and Wood, "Redistribution"; Miller, "Citizenship"; Hébert and Wilkinson, "Citizenship Debates."

affected by the policies that are chosen."[15] Whereas supporters of the politics of recognition support the idea of legitimizing group differences in democratic politics, opponents argue that this model promotes division and fragmentation among groups as it privileges groups' segmental identities such as ethnicity, class, religion, and sexuality.[16] By highlighting differences, the politics of recognition downplays the common bond among various marginalized groups and disguises class conflicts that underlie many of the struggles.[17] What is needed are new theories of citizenship that move away from universal conceptualization to focus on multidimensional and plural concepts of citizenship. Within the new framework, citizenship would be viewed not as a fixed entity but as a fluid and ongoing process of negotiation of identity and difference.

In the discipline of geography, the politics of space is an important tool for examining the relationship between immigration, place, and identity. According to the politics of space theory, the concept of place or community is constructed through discourses, practices, and relations between people.[18] Supporters of this theory acknowledge that regional interests arise from the interests of groups in a given place; in addition, within regions there are tensions between centers and hinterland, so that all voices within a region are not equally represented.[19] Advocates of the politics of space argue that policies regarding regional development must ensure the participation of all groups residing within these places and that the policies must reflect the interests of all groups.[20]

Immigration and Settlement in Small Canadian Cities

For the purpose of this research, the term *city* will be used to define sets of social relations, symbols, and political economies expressed in the city, and *urban*

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[15] Miller, "Citizenship," 64.

[16] Isin and Wood, "Redistribution"; Miller, "Citizenship."

[17] Miller, "Citizenship."

[18] Ash Amin, "The Regions Unbound: Towards a New Politics of Space," *Geography Annual* 86B, no. 1 (2004): 33–44.

[19] Amin, "Regions"; R. Alan Walks, "The Urban in Fragile, Uncertain, Neoloberal Times: Towards New Geographies of Social Justice?" *The Canadian Geographer* 53, no. 3 (2009): 345–56.

[20] Amin, "Regions"; Larry S. Bourne and Damaris Rose, "The Changing Face of Canada: The Uneven Geographies of Population and Social Change," *The Canadian Geographer* 45, no. 1 (2001): 105–19; Walks, "Urban."

will refer to a process rather than a category.[21] The transformations brought about by globalization and transnational migration create new linkages that connect the global to the local. As Setha M. Low comments,

> The city is not the only place where [global and local] linkages can be studied, but the intensification of these processes—as well as their human outcomes—occurs and can be understood best in cities. Thus, the "city" is not a reification but the focus of cultural and sociopolitical manifestations of urban lives and everyday practices.[22]

Emphasizing the interaction between the global and the local is useful for the study of the transformations that have taken place in Canadian cities.

Research indicates that Canada is becoming increasingly urban.[23] Cities have been growing rapidly since the 1920s, and metropolitan areas since the 1970s.[24] This growth has been attributed to, among other things, demographic transition and changes in components of demographic growth, changes in family structure, increases in immigration and cultural diversity, changes in global markets, and the shift between the state and civil society.[25] These changes contribute to the rise in ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity in Canada. A study by Larry S. Bourne and Jim Simmons demonstrates how the majority of the country's current wealth, employment, and population are concentrated in 139 cities with populations of 10,000 or more. Bourne and Simmons's research shows a discrepancy in growth between cities: While larger cities or metropolitan places with a population of more than 10,000 grew by 6.2 percent in 2003, cities of less than 10,000 grew by only 1.5 percent in the same year. Bourne and Simmons suggest that the level of metropolitan concentration will increase in the future. At

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[21] Setha M. Low, "The Anthropology of Cities: Imagining and Theorizing the City," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25 (1996): 383–409.

[22] Ibid., 384.

[23] Bourne and Rose, "Changing Face"; Larry S. Bourne and Jim Simmons, "New Fault Lines? Recent Trends in the Canadian Urban System and Their Implications for Planning and Public Policy," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 12, no. 1 (2003): 22–47; Daniel Heibert, "Newcomers in the Canadian Housing Market: A Longitudinal Study 2001-2005," *The Canadian Geographer* 53, no. 3 (2009): 268–87; Margaret Walton-Roberts, "Regional Immigration and Dispersal: Lessons from Small- and Medium-Sized Urban Centres in British Columbia," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 37, no. 3 (2005): 12–34; Casey Warman and Christopher Worswick, "Immigrant Earnings Performance in Canadian Cities: 1891 through 2001," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 13, no. 1 (2004): 62–84.

[24] Bourne and Simmons, "New Fault Lines?"

[25] Bourne and Rose, "Changing Face"; Heibert, "Newcomers"; Walton-Roberts, "Regional Immigration"; Warman and Worswick, "Immigrant Earnings."

the time of their research, 57 percent of the country's population lived in 15 metropolitan areas with populations over 300,000.[26] Out of the 139 cities identified by the authors, 69 places suffered from population decline. Bourne and Simmons predict that differences in growth rates among cities "will likely lead to very different urban environments in the years to come—each with relatively distinctive social, economic, and policy challenges."[27]

According to the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, approximately 237,758 new immigrants arrived in Canada in 2007. The majority of these were admitted as Business Class immigrants (60.3 percent). Others were admitted as Family Class (26.5 percent), Refugee Class (8.8 percent), and Other immigrants (4.3 percent). These immigrants tend to gravitate to three provinces: Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia. Ontario received the largest number of immigrants (110,896), Quebec received 45,212, and British Columbia welcomed 43,950 immigrants. Within these provinces, the majority of immigrants tend to settle in larger cities such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver.[28] Scholars suggest that immigrants concentrate in large cities because of the existing social networks that aid newcomers in obtaining employment and housing.[29] Also, immigrant groups are often seen by Canadians as "different" or "other" because of their cultural values and religious differences, so they prefer to settle in large cities where there is more diversity.[30] While the significant number of immigrants contributes to the economic growth in these cities, concerns have been raised by researchers and policy makers that immigrant clustering in large cities

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[26] Bourne and Simmons, "New Fault Lines?"

[27] Ibid., 28.

[28] British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, *Immigration Trends Highlights 2007* (Online, 2007), http://www.welcomebc.ca/shared/docs/communities/immigrationtrends2007.pdf.

[29] Bourne and Simmons, "New Fault Lines?"; Hugh Grant and Arthur Sweetman, "Introduction to Economic and Urban Issues in Canadian Immigration Policy," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 13, no. 1 (2003): 1–24; Kristin Good, "Patterns of Policies in Canada's Immigrant-Receiving Cities and Suburbs: How Immigrant Settlement Patterns Shape the Municipal Role in Multiculturalism Policy," *Policy Studies* 26, no. 3/4 (2005): 261–89; Carlos Teixiera, "New Immigrant Settlement in a Mid-Sized City: A Case Study of Housing Barriers and Coping Strategies in Kelowna, British Columbia, *The Canadian Geographer* 53, no. 3 (2009): 323–39; Walton-Roberts, "Regional Immigration."

[30] Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Judith A. Garber, "The Construction of Geography of Immigration as a Policy Problem: The United States and Canada Compared," *Urban Affairs Review* 40, no. 4 (2005): 520–61; Laura Y. Liu, "The Place of Immigration in Studies of Geography and Race," *Social and Cultural Geography* 1, no. 2 (2000): 169–82.

may act as a hindrance to immigrants' acquisition of skills in Canada's official languages (English and French); in addition, such clustering can limit immigrants' earnings, discourage immigrant dispersal, and play a role in the formation of ethnic ghettos.[31]

Because the opportunities for economic advancement in Canada are mainly dependent upon proficiency in one of the official languages, immigrants who possess few or no skills in these languages are at a severe disadvantage. A study by Hugh Grant and Arthur Sweetman reveals a decline in the number of immigrants who can speak the official languages fluently. Grant and Sweetman conclude that the earnings of immigrants who speak neither English nor French tend to be lower than those of immigrants who are fluent in at least one of the official languages.[32] Other studies also show a general downward trend in immigrants' earnings, especially in large cities, since the 1980s. A study by Casey R. Warman and Christopher Worsick shows how immigrants who arrived in Canada prior to the 1980s earn higher incomes than those who arrived later. The study also demonstrates that the incomes of immigrants in large cities are generally lower than those of their Canadian-born counterparts. Warman and Worsick attribute the differences in earnings mainly to fluctuations in the economy; they also suggest that immigrants' earnings tend to rise over time.[33] Although their study contributes to our understanding of immigrants' economic performance in Canadian large cities, there has been little research on immigrants' settlement patterns in small cities, and knowledge about settlement patterns in small cities remains limited.

In response to the demographic shift that has taken place over the years, provincial and municipal governments across Canada have made efforts to attract immigrants. However, the responses of municipalities to the ethnocultural diversity of immigrants have been varied.[34] Research by Kristen Good indicated that the cities of Toronto (Ontario) and Vancouver (British Columbia) have been

> comprehensive in adapting their services and governance structure" to address diverse needs of immigrants and ethnocultural minorities. Good cited various policies that these two cities adopted to accommodate immigrants' needs,
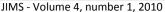
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[31] Abu-Laban and Garber, "Construction"; Liu, "Place of Immigration"; Walton-Roberts, "Regional Immigration."
[32] Grant and Sweetman, "Introduction," 11–12.
[33] Warman and Worswick, "Immigrant Earnings."
[34] Good, "Patterns."

including "multilingual interpretation and translation policies, employment equity policies, and anti-racism policies.[35]

There have also been joint efforts between federal, provincial, and municipal governments to help immigrants settle and integrate within Canadian society. For example, the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP), a form of regionalization policy, enables provinces and territories to select immigrants according to their economic needs and interests. In Quebec, immigrants are required to possess French language skills in order to obtain employment in the province. In 2005, the PNP agreement existed in all provinces and territories except for Ontario and Nunavut. At the municipal level, the City of Winnipeg introduced the Winnipeg Private Refugee Sponsorship Assistance Program (WPRSAP) in 2002 to support the Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council's refugee sponsoring program.[36]

In British Columbia, Premier Gordon Campbell introduced the WelcomeBC Program in 2007 to help immigrants "moving to British Columbia access existing and expanded services under one umbrella so they are better able to adapt to life in their new communities." At the time, the premier expressed his optimism that the new program "will help newcomers to British Columbia find everything from important information about English language courses to employment, health, education and recreation services in their new communities." Furthermore, Campbell pledged "$43 million over two years through WelcomeBC to help expand these important services and help immigrants adapt to their new life in British Columbia." In the same year, the British Columbia provincial government and the federal government entered the Cooperation on Immigration Agreement, under which the federal government agreed to contribute $71.5 million in funding over a two-year period to expand services to aid immigrants with their settlement, and $1.573 million for the expansion of antiracism and multiculturalism services. The provincial government was required to invest part of the funding to develop programs in cooperation with service providers.[37] The WelcomeBC Program was intended

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[35] Ibid., 269.
[36] Walton-Roberts, "Regional Immigration."
[37] BC Liberal Party. *WelcomeBC to Help Immigrants Settle, Access Work* (Online, 2007), http://www.bcliberals.com/news/strong_communities/welcomebc_to_help_immigrants_settle,_access_work.

to reduce waiting times for English training and increase access to advanced language training for those trying to gain employment. The initiative will improve immigrants' access to jobs, reduce barriers for refugees and assist newcomers to settle into their communities. It will also help immigrant youth and their families.[38]

The existence of these programs demonstrates the importance of joint efforts between various levels of government.

Scholars have noted that the economic restructuring that took place in recent years in response to the changes of the global market, refugee and immigration policies, and the rise of neoliberal public policies not only shaped relations between large and small cities but also produced new social identities and otherness in cities across Canada.[39]. Neoliberalism involves, among other things, a reliance on market solutions

> to public policy problems, privileging the action of the wealthy and the "talented", the privatization of state assets and functions, and an attack on welfare state provision. At its heart, neoliberalism is a political project with utopian overtones that seeks to restructure welfare states and reinstate class power.[40]

Neoliberal policy shifts have been associated with the decline of the welfare state and the reduction of responsibility in service delivery and expenditures. Among the problems created by neoliberalism for Canadian cities are the uneven resource allocation and decision-making processes whereby upper levels of government possess the majority of power. These changes pose serious challenges for local governments as they struggle to fulfill their new responsibilities.[41]

The economic restructuring in conjunction with the rise of neoliberal policies and changes in the global market have negatively affected small cities more than large ones, because smaller cities' economies are less diversified and are affected by policy makers in larger urban centers.[42] Across Canada, these negative effects are more apparent in small resource-based cities and towns. The economic production in these places is often based on specific commodities such as lumber, mining, agricultural products, and fishing. The constant fluctuation of demands and supplies driven by the global economy place these small cities and towns in a more

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[38] Ibid.
[39] Walks, "Urban."
[40] Ibid, 346.
[41] Walks, "Urban."
[42] Ibid.

vulnerable position than their larger counterparts. Small resource-based cities and towns are made even more vulnerable by the temporary nature of the work and the labour force.[43] With economic restructuring, small cities and towns across Canada become increasingly vulnerable.

Prior to World War II, small cities and towns were mainly isolated and self-sufficient in the provision of services. However, the situation changed after the war, when the federal government became the main provider of public services such as health care and education.[44] Since the 1980s, there has been a decline in government support for public services. This shift was characterized by the downsizing or closing of post offices, employment service offices, and human resource offices in small cities and towns. In addition, declines in transfer payments for health care and education from the federal government to provincial governments severely reduced these services in small municipalities. The problem has been compounded by changes in provincial funding for immigrant services since the 1990s and by increased regionalization of services. These changes resulted in further downsizing or closing down of essential services such as health care and education in small cities and towns, and increased centralization of services in larger cities.[45]

The downsizing of public services in conjunction with the shift in provincial government funding has significant impact on residents in small cities and towns, especially those identified as vulnerable (e.g., immigrants, women, and seniors). Under the changes, residents are now forced to travel to access services, and this proves to be particularly challenging for those who experience financial constraints and do not have access to transportation. It also has a negative effect on the quality of services residents receive in small cities; the restructuring compels residents in these places to create alternative strategies in order to retain services. A study carried out by Greg Halseth and Laura Marie Ryser in the towns of Mackenzie (British Columbia), Wood River (Saskatchewan), Tweed (Ontario), and

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[43] Sean Markey, Greg Halseth, and Don Manson, "Challenging the Inevitability of Rural Decline: Advancing the Policy of Place in Northern British Columbia," *Journal of Rural Studies* 24 (2007): 409–21.

[44] Markey et al., "Challenging"; Brian Stauffer and Greg Halseth, "Population Change in Prince George," in *A Social Geography of B.C.'s Northern Capital*, ed. G. Halseth and R. Halseth (Prince George: UNBC Press, 1998), 13–44.

[45] Greg Halseth and Laura Marie Ryser, "The Deployment of Partnership by the Voluntary Sector to Address Service Needs in Rural and Small Town Canada," *Voluntas* 18 (2007): 241–65.

Springhill (Nova Scotia) found that residents in these communities increasingly rely on volunteer organizations such as churches. Halseth and Ryser's findings also indicate a need for improved cooperation between volunteer organizations and municipal service agencies in order to cope with the economic restructuring, cutbacks in services, and regionalization of services.[46]

A study by Margaret Walton-Roberts sheds some light on immigrant settlement decisions and the challenges immigrants experience in the small cities of Kelowna and Squamish (British Columbia). Walton-Roberts's analysis indicates that immigrant settlement decisions were largely based on the existence of employment opportunities and family networks. Her research also identifies several problems that immigrants experience in these small cities. The challenges include a shortage of governmental services that provide language training and accreditation. Many immigrant respondents in Walton-Roberts's study expressed discontent with the lack of information about, and peripheral services for, the language training that they received. The limited number of English classes offered in small cities hinders immigrants' opportunities to acquire official languages. Walton-Roberts also interviewed staff from the Multicultural Society in Kelowna and in Squamish about the language training services offered to immigrants. Staff in both cities suggested that recent provincial budget cutbacks have had a profound effect on the quality of services provided to immigrants and that local municipal governments do not have enough resources to meet the needs of immigrants. Walton-Roberts concluded that the issue of coordination between local governments, service providers, and senior levels of government need to be addressed in order to encourage immigrant dispersal in small cities.[47]

Aside from limited language training opportunities, the participants in Walton-Roberts's research considered the issue of accreditation to be a major obstacle to immigrants' economic advancement. Walton-Roberts found that employers' failure to recognize immigrants' qualifications and experience is a contributing factor in immigrants' feelings of marginalization. She further suggested that regardless of where immigrants choose to settle, the lack of recognition of such skills will hinder the integration of immigrants in Canadian social and economic systems.[48] Walton-Roberts's study demonstrates that much

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[46] Ibid.

[47] Walton-Roberts, "Regional Immigration."

[48] Ibid.

remains to be done to address the issue of immigrants' accreditation.

A recent study by Carlos Teixeira examines the current housing crisis in the city of Kelowna and the effects it has had on new immigrants' access to housing. Kelowna is one of the fastest growing cities in Canada; its population increased from 70,000 in 1971 to 107,000 in 2006. As in other fast-growing cities in the country, a recent economic boom has led to an increased demand for labor. In addition, Kelowna has acquired a reputation as an ideal place to retire. The provincial and municipal governments are aware of the city's growing need for labor and have placed the issues of recruiting and retaining immigrants at the top of their political agendas. Although economic development and changes in the city's population have increased the demand for housing, there is a lack of affordable housing in both rentals and homeownership in Kelowna. In addition, the city has not been successful in attracting immigrants to fill the labor gap. Of Kelowna's 107,000 residents, approximately 15 percent are immigrants, compared to 25 percent in British Columbia as a whole. None of the few ethnic clusters in the city have developed into well-established ethnic communities typically found in large cities, and the city suffers from a lack of multicultural atmosphere as a result. In the absence of ethnic neighborhoods, newly arrived immigrants are forced to rely mainly on existing kinship networks for help with housing and employment. The steady rise in housing prices, in conjunction with the lack of affordable housing, poses a serious challenge for new immigrants seeking housing in Kelowna and has important implications for immigrants' residential mobility.[49] Teixeira's research demonstrates that all levels of government need to give more attention to the issue of housing access among immigrants in small cities.

The Construction of Immigrants and Immigration in Canada

In viewing Canada's immigration history, the challenge has always been creating a narrative that can be relevant to and provide a shared meaning for different groups who experienced the historical events. Prior to the late 1970s, Canada's immigration history was predominantly characterized by the arrival of people from Europe.[50] However, the history of non-European immigrants and indigenous people predate the founding of Canada in 1867, and since the end of

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[49] Teixiera, "New Immigrant."
[50] Bourne and Rose, "Changing Face."

World War II and especially since the 1960s, various waves of immigration from non-European countries have contributed to Canada's ethnocultural diversity. A shift in federal refugee and immigration policies since the 1960s has encouraged immigration from what were previously considered nontraditional sources, particularly Africa, Latin America, and Asia.[51] These immigrants from diverse social and economic backgrounds contribute significantly to the skilled labor force and to Canadian diversity.

Researchers have noted the significant role of the news media in shaping the public's perception and understanding of immigrants and immigration in Canada. Specifically, these researchers suggest that immigrants are often misrepresented or underrepresented in the dominant news media.[52] As Minelle Mahtani comments, the media have "power to create social agendas, construct ideologies and frame social issues, providing the lens through which we view ourselves."[53] The events of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan altered the representation of immigrants in the news media. Studies such as Mahtani's demonstrate how these events contribute to the misrepresentation of immigrants in news media. Mahtani's study shows how contemporary dominant news media in Canada draw heavily on oriental discourses to construct narratives and representations of immigrants. Through news stories about immigrants, the news media have succeeded in reinforcing hegemonic racial and national ideologies.[54] Consequently, the distorted images of immigrants in news media effectively contribute to tensions between different ethnic and cultural groups and shape immigrants' sense of belonging in Canada.

Migration and the Boom and Bust Years in Prince George

Prince George has been known as a resource-based city specializing in the production of lumber products. As is the case in other forest resource based communities, much of the local economy is highly vulnerable to fluctuations in global markets for local forest products. The development of forest resources

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[51] Bourne and Rose, "Changing Face"; Good, "Patterns"; Grant and Sweetman, "Introduction."

[52] Abu-Laban and Garber, "Construction"; Minelle Mahtani, "The Racialized Geographies of News Consumption and Production: Contaminated Memories and Racialized Silences," *GeoJournal* 74 (2008): 257–64.

[53] Mahtani, "Racialized Geographies," 258.

[54] Mahtani, Racialized Geographies."

created a demand for public services and commercial sector employment, and development in these economic sectors generated an increase in population from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. Both interprovincial and international immigrants have been attracted by the employment opportunities in the community. The boom periods of the 1960s and the 1980s led to an influx of migrants to fill the labor gap. Aside from the forest industry sector, the establishment of postsecondary institutions such as the College of New Caledonia and later the University of Northern British Columbia contributed to the expansion of services in the area.[55]

The growth of Prince George can be traced back to the early 20th century, when the city provided railway connections to eastern Canada. In 1903, the federal government entered an agreement with the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company, whereby the latter would construct a railway line from Winnipeg through central British Columbia. During the construction of the railway line, the indigenous population in the city was displaced to the community of Shelly, upstream on the Fraser River. In 1915, Prince George was officially incorporated into the province of British Columbia. Between 1915 and 1950, not many immigrants came to Prince George. Approximately 50 sawmills were operating at this time, and many of the economic opportunities were connected to logging and sawmills. Early international immigrants to the city were mainly young European males who stayed for short periods. The second period of growth in Prince George came about during the 1950s; a second rail line was constructed to connect the city with Vancouver, improving the transportation link between Prince George and other parts of the country and contributing to the growth of the city. The creation of the Prince George Pulp and Paper Mill in 1966 transformed the city from a small resource-based community into one of British Columbia's major industrial centers. During the construction period, many skilled trade workers moved to the city, and most remained after the mill was built. Most of these workers brought their families with them or married locally and made Prince George their home. In 1968, the Intercontinental Pulp and Paper Mill was constructed, creating an additional 400 permanent jobs.[56]

Since the early 1970s, concerns about urban management have emerged in

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[55] Bev Christensen, *Prince George: Rivers, Railways, and Timber* (Burlington, Ontario: Windsor Publications, 1989); Stauffer and Halseth, "Population Change."
[56] Christensen, *Prince George*; Stauffer and Halseth, "Population Change."

Prince George. In 1973, the city of Prince George carried out a study to try to find solutions to the problems caused by urban growth. At the time, the main concern was extending the city boundaries to accommodate the growing population. Despite opposition by some residents, the municipal government perceived that extension was necessary to address service problems in the city. At the time of the study, Prince George's population was growing rapidly. The city's annual growth rate reached 6.5 percent to 7.5 percent, exceeding both the national average (less than 2 percent) and the provincial average (4 percent).[57] In 2006, the population of Prince George was 70,981, and approximately 4,205 people in the community identified themselves as members of a "visible minority."[58] In 1975, with the approval of the provincial government, the city expanded its boundaries to include most of the surrounding population.[59]

Because Prince George's economy is based primarily on resource industries, it is vulnerable to market fluctuations. Since the early 1980s, a decline in the forest industry has had a significant effect on the city's population.[60] The economic recession significantly slowed down economic development, and the population remained almost unchanged between 1981 and 1986. The creation of the University of Northern British Columbia in 1992 signaled the emergence of Prince George as an increasingly cosmopolitan city. The university provided opportunities for local residents to obtain postsecondary education while remaining in the area. The hiring of faculty and support staff brought additional population to the city.[61] However, questions have been raised as to whether the growing educational sector will help to generate other economic activities.

The economic recession of the early 1980s was exacerbated by increases in labor costs, demand for low-cost products, and low-cost global competitors, as well as by an ongoing trade dispute with the United States over softwood lumber and a shift in provincial resource policies.[62] In response to the changes, resource companies underwent a series of restructurings toward a more "flexible style of

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[57] Stauffer and Halseth, "Population Change."
[58] BC Stats, *Profile of Diversity in BC Communities 2006: Prince George: A City in Fraser-Fort George Regional District* (Online, 2006),
http://www.welcomebc.ca/shared/docs/diversity/2006/Prince%20George.PDF.
[59] Stauffer and Halseth, "Population Change."
[60] Christensen, *Prince George*.
[61] Stauffer and Halseth, "Population Change."
[62] Markey et al., "Challenging."

production."[63] the changes involved increased levels of technology, larger mills, and fewer employees. The restructurings have had significant social and economic impacts in Prince George, a city that relies mainly on resource industry production for growth.

Layoffs and the closing of a number of pulp mills since the 1980s have led to a decrease in the city's population for the first time since World War II. The economic decline also served to deter immigration to Prince George. These changes also had an important effect on the age structure of the city's population. The restructuring severely limited opportunities for young people to enter the workforce. The aging of Prince George's population poses problems for health care and community services in the city.[64]

The response of the federal and provincial governments to restructuring since the 1980s is best described as a general economic and social withdrawal. The withdrawal of federal and provincial support for public services has been partly in response to the rising demand for "bottom-up" representation and local control.[65] However, some scholars interpret it as a form of abandonment and a failure to recognize the need for ongoing government support for local development.[66] The restructuring led to a series of downsizings or closures of governmental services such as employment, schools, and postal services in Prince George and other northern communities.[67] In order to retain these essential services in Prince George, the community would have needed to assume additional financial burdens. Together, these changes have had a significant effect on the delivery of essential services—such as health, education, language training, and housing—to new immigrants. Immigrants who do not speak English or French are especially likely to experience challenges in accessing social services and obtaining adequate employment.

Since the early 1980s, the provincial government's public policy has been geared toward large-scale industrial resource development. This has translated into an expansion of oil and gas development projects as well as lifting some forest industry regulations in order to generate interest in investment.[68] The

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[63] Ibid., 414.
[64] Stauffer and Halseth, "Population Change."
[65] Halseth and Ryser, "Deployment"; Markey et al., "Challenging"; Walks, "Urban."
[66] Halseth and Ryser, "Deployment"; Markey et al., "Challenging."
[67] Markey et al., "Challenging."
[68] Ibid.

government's perception of resource-based communities mainly as places for resource extraction means that little attention is given to improving social services in these communities.

Conclusion

Canada continues to rely on immigration for population, economic, and social growth. In recent years, however, changes in the global market, the rise of neoliberalism, and shifts in regional development have influenced immigrants' earning power and shaped their settlement patterns. These changes in turn have produced uneven development of cities across Canada. Recent funding cutbacks, changes in public policies, downsizing or closure of public offices such as post offices and employment services, increased local government autonomy, and economic restructuring have had negative impacts on small cities like Prince George. These changes create new challenges for local residents and new immigrants in accessing essential services such as language training, education, housing, and health care. At the same time, small cities across the country are aware of and have made attempts to cope with these changes.

The federal and provincial governments' emphasis on localization of social and economic development continues to challenge small cities like Prince George. The downsizing or closure of public services makes it difficult for immigrants to gain access to these services and thereby limits their opportunities for economic advancement. As a result, immigrants and other marginalized groups are further excluded from participating fully in Canadian society. Although the provincial government has made a series of attempts to encourage the dispersal of immigrants to small cities over the years, recent economic restructuring and the decline in public services pose important questions about immigrants' access to essential services and their sense of belonging in Canada. This paper identified some of the major challenges facing contemporary small cities: demographic changes, access to public services, and the politics of regional and local inclusion and exclusion. There is a need for greater investment by the federal and provincial governments in restoring public services and expanding local economies. The process of change can begin by increasing funding to local public service providers and encouraging greater cooperation between governments at all levels, as well as between governments and local organizations.

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