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# Region of Peel Immigration Discussion Paper

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## From Generation to Generation: Utilizing the Human Capital of Newcomer Parents to Benefit Families

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## Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Context	3
2.1	Immigration to Canada	3
	Table 1: Selection Factors for Skilled Immigrants in Canada	
2.2	Migration and the Family Unit	4
2.3	Human Capital of Newcomers	6
	Education	
	Capacity in an official language	
	Occupational skill level	
2.4	Declining Economic Outcomes for Newcomers	8
	1. Income	
	2. Occupational status/Working in one's profession	
	3. Racial, cultural and country of origin differences	
	4. Gender differences	
	5. Barriers to employment	
	6. Lack of pre-migration education about working in Canada	
	7. Insufficient recognition for foreign credentials	
	8. Lack of Canadian work experience	
	9. Cultural differences and lack of knowledge of Canadian workplace practices	
	10. Access to appropriate settlement services	
	11. Discrimination and lack of awareness about immigrants by employers	
	12. Inadequate social networks	
	13. Barriers to working in the regulated professions	
	14. Barriers affecting women in particular	
3	Impact On Families and Across Generations	16
3.1	How does the human capital of newcomers influence the educational and social outcomes of their children?	17
3.2	How does the economic well-being of parents influence the educational, economic and social outcomes of their children?	19

4	What Kinds of Supports Would Enable Newcomers to Better Assist Their Children?	23
4.1	Improved Labour Market Integration for Newcomer Parents	24
	Summary of main needs	
	1. Access to information about local labour market conditions and opportunities	
	2. Meeting service gaps related to employment and language programs, and other settlement services	
	3. Access to Social and Professional Networks	
	4. Access to Financial Assistance	
	5. Access to Fair and Equitable Hiring and Promotion	
4.2	Improved Family and Community Supports	37
	Summary of main needs	
	1. Enabling newcomer parents to better support their children academically	
	2. Enabling newcomer parents to provide emotional and social supports to their children	
	3. Mitigating the effects of living in poverty.	
	4. Building community social capital	
5	Conclusion	52
	References	54

## 1 Introduction

Most permanent migration to Canada consists of persons either accompanying someone in their family or reuniting with a family member already established in Canada. Critical among this group are the children of immigrants. Successful immigration moves beyond settlement and indeed beyond the longer-term social and economic integration of the newcomer, and includes the outcomes of child and second-generation success. For families, the costs of emigrating and settling in a new land are often shouldered because of the perceived benefits for their children.

In many families, both the principal applicant and spouse come with extensive human capital assets (education and skills) that need to be utilized in order for families to integrate successfully into society. This paper describes the human capital brought to Canada by newcomers and discusses educational and employment prospects for their children who came with them or were born in Canada. It synthesizes existing research on the transmission of educational and economic status across generations and attempts to reconcile what appear to be various contradictory trends in settlement.

First, newcomers to Canada are more highly educated and skilled than previous immigrant cohorts, yet their economic outcomes have been declining. Much of this decline has been attributed to increasing emphasis on credentials, the shift in immigrant origins to new regions of the world, and various related barriers that are described in this paper. At the same time, the second generation (children of immigrants and also, in effect, persons who came to Canada at a very young age) is doing remarkably well as a whole relative to their peers who have Canadian-born parents. Within the overall category of “second generation,” however, wide discrepancies exist in terms of educational and economic outcomes. These discrepancies may be attributed to different attributes within the second generation, including gender, ancestral region of origin, ethnicity, race and also differing community supports or social capital.<sup>1</sup>

For Canada, Ontario and the Region of Peel, the social and economic success of children is critical to national, provincial and Regional prosperity. Estimates indicate that immigration accounts for at least 50% of population growth and will by 2030 almost totally replace fertility rates and be the sole source of population growth. The settlement of immigrants and the success of the second generation are thus increasingly crucial to a Liveable Peel. Understanding what factors influence the educational, occupational and social attainments of children born to immigrant parents will help build the platform of long-run future growth and prosperity in a Liveable Peel.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper focuses on the transmission of human capital assets to the second generation in Canada. For more in-depth discussion of the needs of immigrant and second generation youth, please refer to Region Discussion Paper, *Meeting the Needs of Immigrants Throughout the Life Cycle*.

The findings and suggestions included in this paper will enable the Region of Peel to develop and implement policies and strategies to address the needs of immigrant parents and families. Following the identification of underlying issues, each section includes macro-level solutions that could be advocated for, as well as collaborative initiatives and community-based service provision that the Region might consider implementing. The latter include both programs delivered by the Region as well as community-based and school-based programs.

The paper is organized as follows. We begin with a brief overview of immigration to Canada, including different migration categories and how migration impacts families. We then present data on the human capital immigrants bring with them and trends related to their economic well-being in this country. These provide context for Section Three, which presents Canadian research on the transmission of human capital and economic well-being across generations. Based on these findings, we argue in Section Four that two broad courses of support would enable immigrants to better assist their children in achieving favourable educational, economic and social outcomes: 1) improved labour market integration for newcomer parents; and 2) improved supports to families and communities, including fostering the educational and emotional strength of parents and mitigating the negative impacts of living in poverty. The paper concludes by stating that the poor economic outcomes experienced by many newcomers to Canada, particularly among (visible minorities), point to significant cracks in the human capital model of migration. We call upon policy-makers to maintain a longer-term focus on social inclusion and the needs of families as opposed to shorter-term labour market goals.

## 2 Context

### 2.1 Immigration to Canada

At present, close to 60% of immigrants enter Canada as economic immigrants, including family members of the principal applicant who is either a skilled worker, business immigrant or live-in caregiver. Skilled workers are chosen for their ability to become successfully established in Canada. They are assessed according to a selection grid (point system) that emphasizes education, language ability and skilled work experience. Points-based selection dates to the 1970s in Canada, but it was modified in 1997 to give more weight to education as opposed to specific occupational competencies. It was thought that well-educated, experienced individuals would be able to fill various, changing needs of the labour market in a knowledge economy.

This shift toward a human capital model of migration was validated in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), which came into effect in 2002. Above all else, IRPA emphasizes education, work experience and official language proficiencies in the selection of skilled worker applicants, as detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Selection Factors for Skilled Immigrants in Canada**

Attribute	Points Awarded	Basis for Awarding Points
Education	5-25	High school diploma to PhD
Official language knowledge	0-24	Level of ability in English or French
Work experience	15-21	1-4 years experience in any skilled occupation
Age	10	21-49 years
Arranged employment	0-10	Human Resource and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) confirmed, including extension of temporary work permit
"Adaptability"	0-10	Based on spouse's level of education, Canadian education or work experience, arranged employment, relatives in Canada

Pass mark: 67 out of maximum 100

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada (accessed at <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/skilled/apply-factors.asp> on July 25, 2008).

Business immigrants contribute to the Canadian economy through their direct investment, their entrepreneurial activity or self-employment. The Live-in Caregiver program brings qualified workers to Canada to do live-in work as caregivers to children, elderly persons or persons with disabilities.

In addition to economic migrants, Canada has two other migration streams: the family class and humanitarian immigration. Members of the family class are sponsored to come to Canada by a family member who is either a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada. These family members may be spouses, common-law partners, dependent children or parents or grandparents of someone already in Canada. Most refugees are accepted into Canada as Convention refugees are persons needing protection selected at a visa office abroad or as persons whose claims are heard and accepted by the Immigration and Refugee Board after arrival in Canada.

In addition, temporary residents such as students, foreign workers and visitors may reside lawfully in Canada for a limited period of time. A shifting landscape in immigration policy is evidenced by the significant growth in the numbers of foreign workers and provincial nominees in recent years. The passage of Bill C-50 in June 2008 allows the Immigration Minister to fast-track applications from the immigrant groups it wants, such as skilled workers, and freeze applications from others. Lastly, thousands of persons live in this country without status but have no plans to return to their country of origin. Estimates of their numbers range from 50,000 to 200,000 (Khandor et al., 2004), but these are estimates only, as such data are very difficult to collect.

## **2.2 Migration and the Family Unit**

Migration decisions are generally made within the larger context of family, economy and immigration policy. Indeed, most permanent immigration to Canada consists of persons either accompanying someone in their family or reuniting with a family member already established in Canada. Families – usually nuclear families - may migrate as a unit with the intention of getting established together. Alternately, some members may migrate first, leaving dependent members behind until the situation seems right to bring them to Canada. Analysis of 1991, 1996 and 2001 census data found that men more often lead the way to Canada, to be joined later by women and children, but also that 40% of those reuniting with family members were extended family members such as parents, grandparents and siblings (Thomas 2001, pp.16-18). Thus, in many cases, migration involves the separation of family units as well as the amalgamation of nuclear families into households of extended families, either temporarily or permanently.

Census data indicate some variation in family living arrangements by source region, level of education and language ability. Different patterns of living arrangements reflect historical connections to Canada as well as cultural traditions surrounding gender roles, marriage and extended family living arrangements. Immigrants from Asia and Europe were most likely to live with someone who immigrated in the same year, whereas men from Africa had the greatest likelihood of living alone. Women from Latin America and the Caribbean were most likely to be single parents, and the most likely to lead the migration of their families compared with women from other regions (Thomas 2001, pp. 21-22). It was also found that persons with higher levels of education and greater capacity in English or French were less likely to rely on family members already established in Canada.



In many instances, family separation may be prolonged, leading to family dislocation and the creation of “transnational families.” In general, families do not consider this to be a desirable strategy. Rather, their separation is the product of various circumstances and obstacles such as the pursuit of education or employment; changes in family relationships due to illness, divorce, interfamilial conflict; time required to process immigration paperwork; or child welfare concerns. In their study of Latino mothers who lived in Canada without their children, Bernhard, Landolt, & Goldring (2005) found situations in which spouses had come to Canada and then returned home because of not having their credentials recognized or in which one parent had returned home but the rest of the family had stayed here in order to avoid the stigma of “not making it in Canada.”

Bernhard and her colleagues found that extended family separations had numerous negative outcomes. Subsequent to the various stresses endured at the time of separation (financial insecurity, isolation, depression, etc.), many reunification processes were not the happy events anticipated by family members. In many cases, they write, “the reunification process resulted in a breakdown of the established parent-child relationship and perpetuated the situation of a family with members in two or more countries”(Bernhard, Landolt, & Goldring 2005, p. 2).

In the case of Live-in Caregivers in Canada, family separation is built into the program. After two years of employment, live-in caregivers may apply to become permanent residents of Canada, and to include family members on their application. Echoing Bernhard, Landolt, & Goldring’s findings, a study of Filipino caregivers in Vancouver found that only on a minority of women interviewed were ever joined by their family members in Canada (Pratt 2003, pp. 18-19). In the case of temporary migration such as the Temporary Foreign Worker program, family separation is also the norm.

A newer twist on the transnational family is “astronaut migration” in which migrants who, after taking up residence, spend lengthy periods out of Canada. Typically, the primary breadwinner returns to his country or region of origin to work or do business, leaving his spouse and children in Canada. Most discussion of astronaut migration has referred to (Hong Kong) Chinese families, but there is now some evidence of a new kind of astronaut migration in places such as Peel Region. In these cases, unemployed or underemployed South Asian fathers and husbands work in the Persian Gulf States and send remittances to their families in Canada. There is a need for more data on these types of families, including how widespread this phenomenon is and what the longer-term implications are on families.

Migration patterns in Canada have also resulted in changing family structures in this country, notably the increasing incidences of extended families living together. This varies widely by region of origin. For example, the 2001 census found that South Asian seniors aged 65 and over lived in predominantly family-oriented households, either with their spouses or with other family members. Just 8% of them lived alone, compared with 11% of Chinese seniors and 29% of seniors in Canada overall who lived on their own (Tran, Kaddatz & Allard 2005).

In conclusion, Canadian immigration policy contains an explicit commitment to families, and to family reunification. Nonetheless, migration often involves some separation of family members. In the case of some temporary worker classes, workers are required to leave family members behind, a practice that may lead to difficulties at the time of reunion. In addition to physical configurations, the impact of migration on families can be very stressful. Changing family dynamics such as increased responsibilities given to children, for example, to act as cultural brokers and translators for older family members; changing expectations about parenting and discipline; and rejection of home country cultural norms by the younger generation place pressures upon families that can manifest themselves in a variety of ways.

Family and community supports in the settlement process can be important to mediate those stressors. Section 4.2 of this paper examines the types of family and community supports that can be successful in assisting families and ensuring that second-generation immigrants can achieve successful educational, economic and social outcomes.

### **2.3 Human Capital of Newcomers**

Between 1995 and 2004, just over 20% of persons admitted to Canada were actually assessed by the points system as skilled worker principal applicants and business class (Hiebert 2006: 189). Thus, for every person who was screened by the points system, almost four others entered Canada without such screening. Even so, immigrants admitted to Canada, in general, arrive with considerable human capital (education and skills) for example, between 1991 and 2003, close to two-thirds of teachers and nurses immigrating to Canada arrived in the family and humanitarian categories rather than economic. More than 40% of doctors arrived in family and humanitarian categories (Hawthorne 2008, p. 9). On average, however, the level of education attained by Principal applicants in the Economic Class was higher than that of immigrants arriving through other programs (Hiebert 2006, p. 189).

In this research, we conceive of three categories of human capital: education, capacity to speak English or French and occupational skill level. These correspond to the three categories of the points-based admissions that are worth the most. The following analysis will present the levels of human capital among newcomers as well as reveal the extent to which these various aspects of human capital influence labour market integration.

#### **Education**

Overall, the educational attainment among immigrants to Canada is higher than that of the Canadian-born population. As shown in Table 2, Census data indicate that 23.8% of foreign-born adults had a degree or higher degree in 2001, compared with 15.0% of Canada's native-born population. The percentage with a degree/higher degree has increased over past years of arrival, rising from 20.8% for those arriving before 1991 to 22.1% for those arriving between 1991 and 1996 to 36.6% for those arriving between 1996 and 2001. The most recent cohort in the table was more than twice as likely as the Canadian-born to be degree-qualified. Male migrants were more qualified, with 41% holding degrees compared with 33% of females, but both were considerably higher than the Canadian norm (Hawthorne, 2008, p. 7).

In contrast, the percentage of arrivals with a high school or less or with incomplete post-secondary education has declined among more recent cohorts and is lower than the Canadian-born population overall.

Despite increasing absolute levels of human capital, the relative educational advantage of immigrants to the Canadian-born population in the labour force has actually declined. The overall proportion of Canadians with a university degree has been growing. In 2001, it was 28% for the 25-29 age group. As such, recent immigrants encounter fiercer labour market competition than did their predecessors, particularly if they are young and living in a major urban area (Hiebert, 2006, p. 193; see also Reitz, 2005).

**Table 2: Educational Attainment<sup>1</sup> among Canadian- and Foreign-Born Adults<sup>2</sup>, by Period of Arrival, 2001 (percent)**

	Period of arrival	Degree/ higher degree	Post-secondary, diploma or certificate	Post-secondary, no diploma or certificate	High school or less	All (N)
<b>Canadian-born<sup>3</sup></b>		15.0	19.0	20.1	46.0	16,009,426
<b>Foreign-born<sup>4</sup></b>	Before 1991	20.8	19.9	18.7	40.7	2,657,064
	1991-1996	22.1	17.1	18.5	42.3	719,443
	1996-2001	36.6	14.9	14.2	34.3	726,880
<b>Foreign-born total</b>		23.8	18.5	17.9	39.8	4,103,387
<b>Total</b>						20,112,81

Source: Hawthorne 2008, p. 7, based on 2001 Census (Canada).

<sup>1</sup>Includes those with a bachelor's or a higher degree.

<sup>2</sup>Includes adults aged 15 to 64.

<sup>3</sup>Includes those born outside Canada to Canadian parents. <sup>4</sup>Excludes non-permanent residents (employment authorization, student authorization, minister's permit or refugee claimants).

### Capacity in an official language

A second component of human capital is language capacity. In Canada, the ability to communicate in English or French is a huge asset in the labour market. In recent years, about 60% of immigrants were able to communicate in one of the two official languages of Canada at the time of landing. Because applicants assessed within the points system are required either to take a language test or to supply documentation of any English or French training, they have higher levels of official language capacity. For principal applicants in (PAs) the economic class, 82.4% could communicate in French or English in 2004.

In comparison, 49.4% of spouses and dependents of these PAs, 60.6% of sponsored family members and 61.0% of refugees had capacity in an official language (Hiebert 2006, p. 189).

Regarding the mother tongue of immigrants landing in Canada in 2004, 9.3 declared English and 2.9 declared French as their mother tongue. Canada has seen a marked decline in the number of economic migrants from English-speaking countries. They comprised just 5% of landed immigrants from 1996 to 2001, compared to 25% a decade or more before (Hawthorne 2008, pp.11-12). In sum, most immigrants with Canada can communicate in English or French, but a declining number speak these languages as a mother tongue.

### **Occupational skill level**

Lastly, the human capital of immigrants admitted to Canada can be assessed according to occupational skill level. Applying the five broad categories used by Statistics Canada to immigrants who were at least 15 years old and who had labour market experience before moving to Canada, the results are again impressive. Among these immigrants, 58.1% were professionals, 9.4% had managerial experience, 21.3% were considered to have intermediate or clerical skill levels, and only 1% were seen as having elemental skills. Among skilled worker principal applicants, the ratio of professionals was even higher, at 68.6 % (cited in Hiebert 2006: 190)<sup>2</sup>

### **2.4 Declining Economic Outcomes for Newcomers**

Newcomers to Canada in the 1990s and early 2000s were more highly educated and skilled than previous immigrant cohorts, yet they have not fared as well as their predecessors in terms of employment and earnings (Picot and Sweetman 2005; Reitz 2007b). A gap in employment rates between immigrants and Canadian-born population first emerged in the early 1980s and became more pronounced in the early 1990s, peaking in 1996. According to 2006 Census data, despite strong economic growth in the late 1990s, the gap in labour market conditions between recent immigrants and the Canadian-born persisted. The unemployment rate of recent immigrants aged 25 to 54 was 11.7%, compared with 5.1% for the Canadian-born population and with 6.5% for all immigrants. Unemployment figures do not reflect the many recent immigrants who have dropped out of the labour market altogether.

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<sup>2</sup> These are national figures and include those immigrants who were selected through the Quebec system or within a Provincial Nomination Program of another province. For more information, refer to Canadian and Immigration Canada's Facts and Figures 2006, table on Immigration Overview: Permanent Residents, Canada – Permanent Residents by Labour Market Intention and Occupational Skill Level. These tables do not contain comparisons with the Canadian-born population.

## **Income**

Regarding employment income, early immigrant cohorts average higher earnings than the Canadian-born, but recent immigrants earned somewhat less in 2001. The percentage of immigrants living below the low-income cut-off (LICO), defined by the government as living in poverty, was almost triple for those arriving between 1991 and 2001 compared with Canadian-born persons (Grant and Sweetman, 2004, pp.11-14).

A decline in economic well-being holds true even for skilled immigrants. Overall, highly educated immigrants tend not to perform as well as Canadian born individuals on all indicators. While those with higher degrees tend to do better (Immigrants with Master's or PhDs are more likely to hold professional positions and less likely to be out of work), visible minorities and those from non-English-speaking countries fare considerably worse. Statistics Canada research found that – despite high levels of education - the earnings of immigrant cohorts arriving between 1990 and 2000 were so low that they would have to grow at an “abnormally” high rate in the coming years in order to converge with Canadian-born earnings (Frenette and Morissette 2003). Only 36% of skilled immigrants surveyed in a large-scale Ontario study reported that their economic situation in Canada was better than it had been in their previous country of residence. Thirty-seven per cent reported that they were worse off economically than before migrating (MTCU 2002, p. 66).

Recent research has found a relatively low correlation between educational attainment (measured by university completion) and employment earnings. However, there is a much higher correlation between language facility and earnings, particularly language capability in the initial settlement phase. It is the particular form of human capital that appears to matter the most (Hiebert 2006).

## **Occupational status/working in one's profession**

Employment rates in the census data relate to holding a job but do not provide information on the type or skill level of the job obtained. Even within the lower employment rates outlined in the previous section, many newcomers are working outside their fields, in positions that are not commensurate with their skills, and are earning well below their potential. The Facts are In! study by the Ontario government (MTCU, 2002) found that 60% of newcomers who took jobs outside their fields of expertise were still working in those jobs three years later. Difficulties with labour market integration for newcomers have long-lasting impact.

Employment-related data from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) revealed that 80% of immigrants aged between 25 and 44 worked in at least one job during their first two years in Canada. (Most of the 20% who had not had any employment during their first two years in Canada were women). However, of those who were employed in Canada, only 33% found a job in their intended occupation during their first year in Canada and another 9% found one in their second year (Statistics Canada 2005).

In 2001, 29.8% of educated immigrants had been able to secure a professional position in the labour market within five years of arrival (Hawthorne 2008, pp. 12-13). Of those with Master's or PhDs arriving prior to 1991, 61% obtained professional positions compared with 45% with Bachelor's degrees, a number similar to the Canadian-born. The numbers for more recent immigrants are not as positive, as 53% of higher-degree-qualified immigrants arriving between 1991 and 1996 secured professional employment and, 44% of those arriving between 1996 and 2001. This discrepancy can be explained by the amount of time the immigrant has been in Canada and the different countries of origin of more recent immigrant cohorts.

Recent immigrants are over-represented in low-skilled occupations. Many work in areas of insecure or "contingent work" that can include part-time, contract and piece work. According to the 2001 Census, 43% of recent immigrants aged 25 to 44 worked in low-skilled occupations. This figure was down from 51% in 1991, but it continues to be an alarming one, especially in view of the fact that recent immigrants are on the whole better educated than Canadians and that one's first job lays the foundation for subsequent employment opportunities (Statistics Canada 2003, pp. 13-14). Because most immigrants are visible minorities, these trends mean that the concentration of immigrants in low-paying occupations is increasingly a "colour line" as well (Teelucksingh and Galabuzi, 2005).

The ability to continue practising one's profession is particularly poor for certain occupations and sending countries/regions. In particular, internationally educated physicians face obstacles to practising in Canada. By 2001, only 3% of Filipino doctors were working in the medical profession, compared with 4% from China, 8% from Eastern Europe, 11% from Iraq, 12% from Pakistan and other South/Central Asia, 19% from India and 31% from Hong Kong/Malaysia/Singapore (Hawthorne 2008, p. 24).

### **Racial, cultural and country of origin differences**

Where an immigrant comes from and gets his or her education has a significant impact on employment outcomes. A recent study by Statistics Canada found that university-educated immigrants aged 25 to 54 who arrived in Canada within the previous five years were less likely to be employed in 2007 than their Canadian-born counterparts (Gilmore and Le Petit 2008). This was true regardless of the country in which they obtained their degree. Even immigrants who had obtained their degrees in the U.S., Canada or Europe had employment rates of 73% to 78%, much lower than the average of 90.7% for their Canadian-born, university-educated counterparts. Immigrants with degrees from other parts of the world fared worse.

Employment rates for those with degrees from Asia were 65.5%, from Latin America were 59.7% and from Africa were 50.9%. The gap in employment rates between degree-holding immigrants and the Canadian-born narrowed the longer an immigrant had been in Canada.

Another analysis focusing on birthplace found similar results. Among immigrants with post-secondary degrees who arrived in Canada between 1996 and 2001, the ones most likely to secure work in their own or another profession were from South Africa, Australia/New Zealand, United Kingdom/Ireland, Northwestern Europe and the U.S. (Hawthorne 2008, pp. 12-18).

These countries have higher education systems comparable to Canada's. And, with the exception of Northwestern Europe, these are of course countries where English is the linguistic norm. In contrast, immigrants least able to access work in Canada during this period were from Iraq, Taiwan, Lebanon and "other North and Southeast Asia." Educated immigrants from the Philippines, India, Vietnam and "other South/Central Asia" (probably mostly from Pakistan) had better employment rates but were likely to work in low-skilled positions (Hawthorne 2008, pp.13-18).

In sum, immigrants from countries that are culturally closer to Canada fare better on the whole. Immigrants from various parts of Asia, Latin America, and Africa have lower employment and income outcomes in Canada. That members of these latter groups tend to be visible minorities (also referred to as racialized groups) raises questions about discriminatory practices in this country. As noted by Reitz (2007a, p.19) "If [employment] barriers exist more often among members of certain origins groups, such as visible minorities, they constitute discriminatory treatment." Indeed, visible minorities - whether immigrants or not - have the worst employment outcomes in Canada. They had lower participation rates and higher unemployment rates compared with the total population in 2001 (Teelucksingh and Galabuzi 2005, p. 6).

It is difficult to disentangle country of origin factors from racial and cultural factors, but it may be that the latter actually contribute more to employment disparities among groups. This was the finding of one field study using similarly-qualified actors applying for jobs (Henry and Ginsberg 1985). The largest and most extensive studies of census data have found that members of racialized groups born in Canada face significant disadvantages in the labour market, while racial minority immigrants face even more disadvantage (cited in Reitz 2007 a, p. 27).

Whether immigrants or Canadian-born, Black persons report the highest levels of discrimination (for example, Reitz and Banerjee 2007; see also Reitz 2007a, p. 27). There is a need for new studies that test actual levels of discrimination in the workplace, both in terms of hiring and promotion. These should focus on immigrant populations as well as visible minorities.

### **Gender differences**

Skilled migration is becoming increasingly feminized, and labour market outcomes for women have been the focus of academic analysis (e.g., Boyd 1992; Boyd, DeVries & Simkin 1994; Zlotnik 1995; Lee 1996; Yeoh and Khoo 1998).

In Canada, female immigrants in all immigration categories performed significantly worse than immigrant males in the same age group and field and worse than the Canadian-born of either gender. Married immigrant women who migrate with their spouses are more likely to be under-employed than are others, partly because they live in places where suitable job opportunities are available to their spouses but not to them. Women who face language and other barriers to finding employment outside the home, including child care and domestic responsibilities, are over represented in contingent work, for example as garment homeworkers (Poon, 2005).

On the positive side, Canadian women with two immigrant parents are more successful than men and women whose parents came to Canada two or three generations earlier. On average, women in this group earned 19% more than women in other groups in hourly earnings and 39% more in annual earnings. Higher earnings are the result of higher education levels among second-generation women, delayed marriage and childbirth, and their propensity to live in urban centres such as Toronto and Vancouver where jobs typically carry higher salaries (Mosazai 2007).

### **Barriers to employment**

The previous sections present the declining economic outcomes for newcomers by describing income levels and by considering the ability to find work in one's field and the impact of cultural, racial and country-of-origin differences. This section enumerates and describes the major barriers that newcomers face to finding employment in Canada. Numerous, specific barriers to employment have been identified and are elaborated upon elsewhere (e.g., Wayland, 2006b). These barriers include:

#### **Lack of pre-migration education about working in Canada**

Many immigrants mistakenly believe that the education and credentials that were good enough to gain them entrance to Canada will enable them to find appropriate employment once they arrive. However, the number of points granted by Department of Citizenship and Immigration has no bearing on an individual's ability to be hired by employers, or to practise an occupation in Canada. Immigrant professionals need access to clear, up-to-date, occupation-specific, labour market information and guidance on licensing, employment and education procedures that can help them on their route to employment.

A first step towards remedying this situation is the Canadian government's "Going to Canada" web portal, operating since 2005, which provides information to would-be immigrants who have access to the Internet and are able to find the portal.

#### **Insufficient recognition for foreign credentials**

Empirical analysis points to this barrier as a major reason for the unemployment and underemployment of newcomers (Alboim, Finnie and Meng, 2005; Aydemir and Skuterud, 2004; Hum and Simpson, 1999). Individuals with foreign qualifications and experience need their credentials recognized and assessed to (1) work in the field for which they have trained, which may entail some type of upgrading (2) to receive credit for studies already completed, or (3) to acquire a licence issued by the provincial regulatory body in order to work in the field.

The procedures for acquiring these assessments vary from province to province and from occupational field to occupational field. Employers are under no obligation to accept the credential evaluations, but they can be useful.



## **Lack of Canadian work experience**

Newcomers to Canada are often told by prospective employers that “Canadian experience” is required for hiring purposes. Employers frequently do not recognize or have the expertise to assess the foreign academic credentials and work experience of immigrants. However, the requirement of Canadian experience may also be nothing more than thinly-veiled discrimination against foreign-born individuals and members of racialized groups, or may stem from prejudices about foreign workplaces. Out of financial necessity, some newcomers are forced to take jobs beneath their abilities, and they may have a difficult time ever leaving underemployment behind.

## **Cultural differences and lack of knowledge of Canadian workplace practices**

Many immigrants are culturally unprepared to cope with new labour market rules and conventions. Cultural norms inform Canadian perspectives in workplaces and in the job search process. In the job search process immigrants may be unfamiliar with the resume and interview process. They also may be unaware of the importance of networking, as these may not be as important to employment-seekers in their places of origin. Immigrants may also be unable to translate their experience in a way that employers can recognize their applicability to Canadian workplaces. Realistically, immigrants’ educational background and work experience may not be directly applicable to/suited for the Canadian workplace and or really transfer their previous knowledge and skills to a Canadian workplace context.

After a person secures employment, cultural differences continue to be important. Knowledge of appropriate interactions and verbal communication in the workplace have been identified as important areas of learning for newcomers (Conference Board of Canada, 2004, p. 4). Many immigrants have indicated that they didn’t realize the differences in terms of the culture, context and practise of their profession.

## **Lack of access to appropriate settlement services**

In the past, many newcomers were able to find employment in the manufacturing sector and in other well-paying occupations that did not require strong language skills. Today, the shift towards a knowledge-based economy in Canada has increased demand for education and communication skills. This raises questions about Canada’s settlement programs and whether they prepare immigrants for the educational, language and skill requirements of today’s job market. Canada’s major offerings in terms of employment services are through the employment insurance (EI) fund, and individuals are only eligible if they have a prior attachment to the labour market in Canada.

## **Discrimination and lack of awareness about immigrants by employers**

Immigrants make up a large portion of labour market growth in Ontario, yet many employers do not see hiring immigrant professionals as important to their organizations (See CLBC, 2004 report). In 2004, the Public Policy Forum interviewed over 2,000 Canadian employers to find out how they were incorporating immigrants into the workforce.

What they found was that employers rarely took immigrants into account in their human resource planning; employers did not hire immigrants at the level at which they were trained; and employers faced challenges integrating recent immigrants into their workforce (Lopes, 2005). Only 9-10% of managers and labour leaders see hiring immigrants as important to their organizations and indeed many even report it as not important to their organizations (p. 15).

Employers often report lack of language proficiency as the obstacle to hiring immigrants along with lack of Canadian work experience and lack of knowledge about their credentials. For example, Alboim et al. (2005) have identified a lack of awareness/understanding on the part of employers on how best to interpret and assess an immigrant's education and previous work experience. Furthermore, a tendency for employers to hire employees who are most like them have also led to barriers for immigrants entering the labour market.

Often, however, research has indicated that these complaints have been code for prejudice, racism and discrimination. Although particular failures may be due to systemic organizational factors as opposed to intentional bias, many newcomers believe that prejudice, stereotypes, racism and discrimination prevent them from accessing the job they deserve. Studies have shown that men feel discrimination in the workplace more than women. A study by Mosazai (2007) indicated that discrimination is the major factor accounting for the discrepancy between second-generation visible minority men and third- and fourth- generation Canadians in terms of their high levels of education, which do not translate into high earnings.

### **Inadequate social networks**

Immigrants are sometimes disadvantaged by a lack of social networks linking them to information about job opportunities. According to Reitz (2007, p. 29), "immigrants who lack friendship networks within the host society are less likely to receive assistance in finding jobs, and those who do not receive such assistance have greater difficulty finding good jobs." Social networks are one aspect of the broader phenomenon of "social capital." Whereas intra-ethnic networks are often used to find employment, the use of social contacts outside one's ethnic group has been correlated with higher incomes for job seekers (Ooka and Wellman, 2006)."

### **Barriers to working in the regulated professions**

For the many newcomers who must gain access to a regulated profession, the barriers enumerated above are compounded by an additional set of hurdles. The specific barriers faced by foreign-trained professionals seeking licensure from an occupational regulatory body include: lack of occupation-specific language skills; lack of access to occupation-specific language training and testing; lack of internship, coop and other placement opportunities to gain the Canadian work experience required by some professions prior to licensing; lack of bridging programs to fill gaps in a candidate's record; lack of networking opportunities; lack of fair, transparent and appropriate testing in the licensing process, along with the cost and time of these processes. Though these latter costs are determined by regulators on a cost-recovery basis, they may nonetheless be beyond the means of some newcomers (Ontario Regulators for Access 2003, pp. 18-19).

## **Barriers affecting women in particular**

The issues facing women and men as they see entry into the labour market are slightly different. Men perceive discrimination as the major barrier to seeking employment and promotion in the workplace, where women indicate lack of financial resources, lack of language proficiency and child care as the major barriers (Da, 2008).

Lack of access to child care, especially culturally appropriate child care, pushes many women into unemployment or employment in menial and more precarious work environments. In a study of Chinese immigrant women, Wei Da (2008) found that these women preferred to obtain child care assistance from their own relatives, however, their income levels did not allow them to meet immigration policy thresholds needed in order to sponsor their parents' migration to Canada to help them with their child care requirements. Their lower level of resources also prevented them from utilizing local child care services or hiring a private caregiver to care for their children (Da, 2008).

In her literature review on integration outcomes for immigrant women, VanderPlaat (2007) found that “[p]rofessional immigrant women often face the burden of having to recertify and rebuild professional careers without the social capital that helped them combine child care and career building in their home countries.” On the other hand, the deskilling of women's work and the ready availability of menial work for women makes them more readily employable.

In conclusion, numerous factors influence the labour market integration of newcomers, including occupation, race, culture, country of origin and gender. Evidence of declining labour market outcomes among newcomers has drawn attention to a range of barriers that newcomers face in Canada, including(1) the discounting of foreign education and work experience, particularly from non-traditional source countries of immigration,(2) the increasing importance of language skills in the workplace, and(3) the ongoing difficulties experienced by people of colour in the labour market. The latter has become linked to immigration because three-quarters of newcomers to Canada are identified as visible minorities.

### 3 Impact on Families and Across Generations

From the perspective of individuals and their families, the costs of emigrating and settling in a new land are often shouldered because of the perceived benefits for the children. In this sense, it is important to understand the long-run educational, occupational and social attainments of children born to immigrant parents. As seen in the research above, it takes first-generation immigrants a considerable length of time to reach parity in the Canadian labour market, and some groups are never able to reach such success. What about the children of immigrants? This issue is extremely important to consider as second-generation immigrants form a sizable proportion of the Canadian population.

This section reports on the research of second-generation immigrant children and the impact of parental factors on outcomes for their children. In general, the data show that second-generation immigrants have higher levels of education and perform well in the labour market compared with those with Canadian-born parents. However, these outcomes are not consistent across ethnic and racialized groups. Blacks, and Black men in particular, do not fare as well.

The educational attainment among immigrant youth and second-generation youth overall is quite remarkable. First- and second-generation youth tend to acquire more years of schooling than do persons with Canadian-born parents (Palameta 2007; Abada, Hou & Ram 2008). At age 15, they have higher educational aspirations than do other Canadians of that age. In particular, immigrant and second-generation youth who are visible minorities are twice as likely to aspire to university education as are other youth of the same age (Krahn and Taylor 2005). This holds true even across racialized ethnic groups. And to a large extent these aspirations are born out: in general, second-generation Canadians not only exceed their immigrant parents' education levels, but they also perform better than Canadian-born Whites of the same age during their youth and into adulthood (Reitz and Zhang 2006).

Despite the uniform nature of early ambitions articulated at age 15, post-secondary completion rates are less uniform among second-generation youth, and differences are segmented along ethnic and racial lines. South Asians are more likely to earn a university degree, whereas university completion rates for Blacks – particularly Black men – are marginally below average. Similarly, high school dropout rates among immigrant youth (not second generation) in Toronto public schools have been found to differ widely based on region of origin. Region of origin surpassed class, family income and household structure as an indicator of dropout rates (studies all cited in Sykes 2008, p. 13). In sum, education outcomes are high for immigrant and second-generation youth overall, but these outcomes are not evenly distributed across ethnic and racialized groups.

In general, research indicates that children's chances of educational and labour-market success are strongly influenced by family-level factors such as income and education of parents. In Sections 3.1 and 3.2, various such factors are examined. An attempt is made to isolate various effects, because in the case of many newcomer families in Canada, parents arrive with considerable human capital, but families live with the effects of poverty at least in the short run. Are the prospects for children in such immigrant families brighter than those in families whose parents have low education levels as well as low income?

The following section looks at the parent-to-child impact of human capital (in the form of education) and the next one examines the impact of parents' economic well-being on children's education, economic and social outcomes. We use education as the primary indicator of success as the research on racialized second-generation individuals is extremely new. It is too early to determine how successful these second-generation racialized youth are performing in the labour market in the long term. Future research should continue to explore this question.

### **3.1 How does the human capital of newcomers influence the educational and social outcomes of their children?**

In general, parental years of schooling and educational attainment positively impact the educational outcomes of their children. Indeed, parental education has been referred to as “the single most important determinant of children's schooling” (Feliciano 2005). Education imparts advantages across generations not only in terms of being able to help children with school work but also in terms of the value placed on education and on the ability to muster resources to help children succeed. More-educated parents adopt strategies that are more likely to steer their children on a successful path (de Broucker and Lavallée, 1998).

In Canada, data taken from the 1994 to 1998 National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) - on all children and youth - found support for the thesis that children with more-educated parents are at an advantage. According to the study, children of parents with high levels of education had above-average performance in school. Children with a parent who had a university degree did significantly better than children whose parents' highest education was a high school diploma (Worswick, 2001).

Due to the selective nature of Canada's immigration under the points system, the children of immigrants in many cases benefit from these educational advantages. Overall, immigrants and their children have more years of schooling on average than do Canadians who have been in the country for more than two generations (Aydemir, Chen and Corak, 2008). In the NLSCY study cited above, the children of immigrant parents were more likely than children with Canadian-born parents to have a parent with a university degree, but it was also the case that they were more likely to have parents with no more than elementary-level education. As such, while we can speak of an overall high level of human capital in terms of education among immigrant families, there are many exceptions. These variations are important to consider when developing strategies to maximize or enhance educational outcomes for the children of immigrants.

Despite evidence that children with more-educated parents are at an advantage overall, recent Canadian research has found that in the case of immigrant families, the influence of parental education levels is less obvious. Looking at the variables associated with how many years of schooling were completed, and based on data collected for the 2001 Census and 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, Aydemir, Chen and Corak (2008) found the educational attainment of men and women whose parents were born in Canada to be more strongly connected to that of their fathers and their mothers than it was for children whose parents were born outside of Canada. This analysis was limited to finding that the intergenerational mobility among children of immigrants to Canada was more loosely correlated than among children of Canadian-born parents. The authors were not able to say why this was the case.

Also using the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, Abada, Hou and Ram (2008) examined university completion rates for persons with immigrant parents from 18 source countries or regions. Within their finding that the children of immigrant parents had higher university completion rates compared with children of Canadian-born parents, the children of Chinese and Indian immigrants had the highest university completion rates. They also found that overall group differences in university completion rates were much smaller among children of immigrant parents than among their parents. Whereas immigrant parents were the products of various educational systems and cultural expectations, the children of immigrants were all products of the Canadian education system.

As a result, group differences in educational attainment were reduced. As such, groups such as Italians and Portuguese whose parental educational levels were very low achieved a large intergenerational mobility, whereas others improved little across generations but still maintained a level near or above the average (p.16). In all groups as a whole, women tended to have higher university completion rates than did men.

In terms of international comparisons, the children of immigrants in Canada fare quite well. Canada and Australia are the only two members countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) where the second generation performs, as well as those with native-born parents on standardized math and reading tests given to 15-year-olds (OECD, 2007). Again, however, these results must be interpreted with some caution as there is widespread variation within the overall “second generation” category. Education levels attained in the second generation are not necessarily the product of equality of opportunity; rather, various other factors may yet be identified (Reitz and Banerjee 2006, pp. 15-16).

There are different explanations as to why parental education impacts educational and social outcomes of children. Educated parents may have been served well by their education and thus value the education they received and its contribution to their own success. Furthermore, educated parents may not only value education themselves but also communicate expectations about education to their offspring and are better able to access various resources (Boyd, 2002). The parent engagement literature highlights that having high expectations of children is the most significant contributor to their academic achievement (Jeynes, 2005).

Though some research has focused on the importance of cultural norms in transmitting values that promote educational attainment, there is evidence in the U.S. that pre-migration education attainment of parents is an important factor (Feliciano 2005). Even if parents’ education does not transfer into the U.S. context, it can be a significant resource for the second generation. According to Feliciano, educational attainment is a means of reproducing social class structures across generations. In other words, it is not so much that education creates social mobility and new opportunities, but rather that families from a certain class background strive to attain a similar class position in the country of settlement. There is also evidence that bilingualism in immigrant children correlates with educational success, perhaps because these children have greater access to community networks and are able to communicate well with their parents (Glick and White, 2003; White and Glick, 2000).

Factors beyond the family unit also impact educational achievement. Borjas (1992) in the U.S. and Aydemir, Chen and Corak (2005) in Canada note the importance of ethnic and other peers, in addition to parents, impacting the skills of the children of immigrants. A study of students from immigrant families in the U.S. found that psychosocial factors- namely a strong emphasis on education shared by students, parents and peers - trumped socioeconomic background in terms of student success (Fuligni 1997). Such social capital or “ethnic capital” enables some communities to better steer their children through barriers they may face in broader society.

Factors within the school environment may also help. When families have a sense of belonging in the school and see themselves reflected in the curriculum and staff role models, they are more likely to engage with the education system and perform well (McMurtry and Curling, 2008).

Some groups appear to be better able to transmit their education (and socioeconomic status) to their children, whereas others may run up against societal barriers affecting chances of upward social mobility. This points to the multidimensionality of the socialization process in diverse family and ethnic settings.

### **3.2 How does the economic well-being of parents influence the educational, economic and social outcomes of their children?**

Just as parental education is an important determinant of educational outcomes in families, so is income and socioeconomic status. OECD research shows direct links between parents’ income and education and their children’s performance at school. According to Levin (2004), socioeconomic status remains the single most powerful predictor not just of education but of all life outcomes. Focusing on overall health outcomes of children, including cognitive, behavioural and physical health, authors of the recent Canadian study *Income and the Outcomes of Children* state:

Higher income is **almost always** associated with better outcomes for children. This is true regardless of the measure of income employed, the assumed functional form of the relationship between income and child outcomes, the age of the child, or the type of child outcome being studied (Phipps and Lethbridge, 2006, p. 4).

Belonging to a family with low socioeconomic status is one of the most important risk factors for student disaffection and low participation (Willms, 2003, p. 38). Students with low socioeconomic status backgrounds were more than 50% more likely than their peers with average socioeconomic status backgrounds to have a low sense of belonging. This research stresses that in virtually every country, students from poor families are more likely to feel lonely or feel like an outsider at school. Being a foreign-born student is also an important risk factor for low sense of belonging. On average, across all participating OECD countries, the effect is of the same magnitude as the effect of belonging to a family with low socioeconomic status (Willms, 2003).

In Canada, visible minority and immigrant children are more likely to be living in poverty than are their native-born counterparts. An analysis of data from the National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth reveals that more than 30% of all immigrant children live in families whose total income falls below the official poverty line (Beiser et al., 2004). Milan and Tran (2004) found that 44% of Black children compared with 19% of non-Blacks live in low income households.

As discussed in greater detail in the Region Discussion Paper, *Meeting the Needs of Immigrants Throughout the Life Cycle*, living in poverty has numerous effects on individuals as well as on the family unit. Most obviously, family income directly impacts one's ability to find adequate housing and to live in safe, healthy neighbourhoods. Other effects on the family unit include stress and family breakdown. When low-income households are the product of unrecognized human capital, there are particular consequences that impact the cultural integration of other immigrants. Opportunities for role modelling and mentoring of newcomer and minority youth are lost. Professionals who can relate to clients in their own languages and are familiar with their cultural backgrounds, a need that is particularly acute the field of health care, are never hired.

In brief, living in poverty is associated with various risk factors that impact families and immigrants to Canada, especially recent immigrants, are more likely to live in poverty than were members of earlier postwar immigrant cohorts. Based on this trend, there are reasons to be concerned about the prospects for immigrants and second-generation Canadians who will have grown up in this context. It is too early to see the full effects of declining economic outcomes on the family unit, but there are a handful of empirical studies that give us insight into intergenerational outcomes. As noted above, the existing data we have on second-generation immigrants indicate positive outcomes overall. However, there is much variation within this overall finding. In order to better understand these variations, and to seek to address them in terms of policies and services, recent empirical evidence on intergenerational outcomes is examined next.

Focusing on educational outcomes of the children of immigrants, Aydemir, Chen and Corak (2008) compared the effects of parental earnings and parental education on the educational outcomes of second-generation Canadians. As noted above, they did find a correlation between years of schooling between parent and child, but this correlation was not as strong as the educational correlation within Canadian-born families. They also found that parental earnings were not a significant influence. If anything, immigrant parents with lower incomes seemed to have more-educated children.

The authors were unable to explain this phenomenon but hypothesized that children of low income parents may have had more altruistic parents who "invested more heavily in non-monetary aspects of human capital than their higher earning counterparts" (p. 16). Anisef and Kilbride (2004, p. 16) credit "ethnic resilience" - the ability to achieve unusually good adaptation in the face of severe stress - and family stability as factors that may help foster personal achievement. Close community ties can also provide support to immigrant and visible minority groups. Lastly, some credit might be given to the public education system. The high educational attainment of the second generation has been used to explain their higher earnings and wages relative to their peers who have Canadian-born parents (Hum and Simpson 2004).



In terms of economic outcomes of children of immigrants to Canada, an analysis of 2001 Census data found that on average, second-generation children earned more than their parents did at a similar point in the life cycle (Aydemir, Chen & Corak, 2005). On average, the correlation between parental earnings and the eventual earnings of their children was found to be low in Canada. This was true for both immigrants and non-immigrants. At least in the period covered in the study, pre-1980 to 2000, there was a rapid integration of the second generation into the mainstream Canadian labour market.

Within the overall conclusion, however, the census data suggested that earnings returns to education among 25- to 37-year-old Canadian men with immigrant parents were not even. Rather, they varied according to parental region of origin. Despite having almost equal levels of education, men whose parents came from Eastern or Southern Europe, and those with parents from the Caribbean, Central and South America or Oceania fared worse:

[They] earned 8% and 28% less, respectively, than those with parents from traditional source countries in North America and Northern or Western Europe. Furthermore, those with parents from Africa or Asia also earned 8% less than those with parents from traditional source countries, despite having nearly twice the rate of university graduation. Among women, earnings were more in line with education- those with parents from Africa or Asia had the highest rates of university graduation and also earned the most (Aydemir, Chen and Corak 2005; cited in Palameta 2007, p. 11).

With a similar focus, but relying on the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID) for the years 1996 to 2001 and 1999 to 2004, Palameta (2007) analyzed data on second-generation Canadians, born between 1967 and 1982. Many of their parents came from non-traditional source countries. In terms of economic outcomes, Palameta found that second-generation women fare significantly better than their male counterparts and that they are also more likely to be employed and to have higher earnings than their counterparts with Canadian-born parents. Some of this advantage can be accounted for by tendencies among second-generation women to live in large cities where salaries are higher, combined with the lower likelihood of being married and of having children of their own (p. 14). Being a visible minority did not have a large effect on women's earnings.

In contrast, visible minority status had a large effect on men's earnings. Even with all other factors being equal, their annual earnings were significantly lower than those of young men with Canadian-born parents and of second-generation men who were not visible minorities (Palameta 2007, p. 14). These findings are consistent with those for older second-generation men by Aydemir, Chen and Corak (2005) described above.

In sum, American and Canadian research has consistently shown that educational, economic and social outcomes are positively influenced by family-level factors such as the education and income levels of parents. Education and socioeconomic status impart advantages across generations.

The smaller body of research on immigrant families in Canada, however, has reached less definitive conclusions. Research has found that the second generation is enjoying strong educational outcomes even when parents lack high levels of education and income. Their success has been attributed to various factors such as high expectations by parents, imported cultural norms, advantages imparted by bilingualism, ethnic community ties and “ethnic resilience” or the ability to achieve unusually good adaptation in the face of severe stress. In terms of economic outcomes, however, differences within the second generation are more apparent. Earnings returns by men with immigrant parents were uneven, and persons with visible minority status earned the least, even when all factors were equal.

In conclusion, there is evidence that many second-generation Canadians are faring quite well in terms of educational and economic outcomes. Two points of caution in this overall assessment are crucial, however. First, there is considerable variation within the second generation, and the poorest outcomes appear to be experienced by men who are visible minorities. This raises questions about how our educational institutions might be failing to meet their needs, and also how factors in the labour market such as discrimination may be impacting visible minority men more than women.

Any initiatives aimed at the well-being of the second generation should pay particular attention to those living in poverty and at risk of social exclusion. Second, the data used in the above studies are already out of date. It is only starting to capture the experiences of second generation Canadians whose parents came from non-traditional source countries and whose families may have experienced precarious economic status after migrating to Canada. The data point to discrepancies in outcomes that must be monitored, and our knowledge must be supplemented by research that can more quickly capture the “on the ground” realities experienced by more recent immigrants and the aging second generation.

#### **4 What kinds of supports would enable newcomers to better assist their children?**

This section presents potential strategies and solutions that Peel could follow to address the needs of immigrants and their families. These strategies and solutions build on the previous sections of this paper. In Section Three, it was shown that many factors contribute to the utilization of human capital and its transfer to the second generation. In immigrant families, difficult-to-measure factors such as parental expectations and ethnic community ties appear to rival income and years of parental education in terms of their impact on the educational outcomes of children. As such, in this section we adopt a two-pronged strategy:

1. Based on what we know about the importance of income and education as positive influences on children's outcomes, we should work to improve the economic well-being of parents by recognizing their human capital assets and enabling their integration into the labour market, and
2. Based on research results highlighting the importance of less-quantifiable but equally important factors, we should provide supports to families and communities that enable parents to support their children and strengthen ethnic, community and neighbourhood social capital.

First, immigrants need to find employment that suits their skills and experience. The research above indicates that many new immigrants are unemployed or underemployed and not utilizing their human capital, and that this situation has huge implications for their families, community and society. Immigrant professionals need accurate and specific information immediately upon arrival (or even before arrival) so that they can quickly integrate into a job commensurate with their skills. The more quickly immigrant professionals are integrated into their occupations, the greater the likelihood that they and their families will be successful in their new surroundings. When the heads of the family are gainfully employed, they are better able to help their children succeed in various aspects of their lives.

Second, immigrant parents face other barriers that prevent them from supporting their children academically as well as emotionally and socially. Research has indicated that parental engagement can improve student achievement (Henderson and Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005). This is true for all groups of children and appears particularly important for members of communities whose academic successes have lagged behind those of other groups. As presented below, the Region of Peel can implement or advocate for a number of strategies to support families and communities. Through a focus on parental support and building community social capital, Peel can prevent the negative impacts of poverty, racism and social exclusion and maximize second-generation success.

#### **4.1 Improved Labour Market Integration for Newcomer Parents**

Employment is the biggest priority for nearly all newcomers. Economic immigrants, particularly, are looking for a good job that is commensurate with their education, skills and experience (Interquest Consulting 2006). Labour market integration of immigrants is key to utilizing human capital and, as was seen above, poor labour market integration has serious implications on the entire family and society. Solutions targeting labour market integration, however, are not simple. Employment relates to a set of interlocking factors, including not only immigrant class and employment credentials, but also cultural meanings of work, cultural competence, discrimination, culturally differentiated labour market conventions and job search patterns and language (Bauder and Cameron 2002).

Most obviously, the cost of not finding employment suitable to one's skills has a negative economic impact. Research indicates that this is not just a short-term concern. Rather, an immigrant's first job lays the foundation for subsequent employment opportunities (Statistics Canada 2003, pp. 13-14). In other words, if a person takes a low skilled job out of financial necessity, the job establishes an employment pattern that may be difficult to break. A Statistics Canada study on this topic found that if "immigrants [escape] low income in their first year, the likelihood of entry in subsequent years [will fall] dramatically to below 10 percent" (Picot, Hou and Coulombe, 2007, pp. 5-6).

Negative mental health outcomes may also result from under-recognized human capital. The 1988 Report of the Canadian Task Force on Mental Health Issues singled out the barriers to trades and professions as major factors leading to an "erosion of skills, loss of technical idiom and diminishing confidence in one's capabilities" (Canadian Task Force, 1988, p. 33). The slow pace of gaining access to appropriate employment has created anxiety and frustration among professionals from different immigrant and ethnocultural backgrounds. These stresses have led to incidences of domestic violence, substance abuse and depression (Mata, 1999).

#### **Summary of main needs**

Given the underlying issues identified that affect the labour market integration of newcomers as presented in Section Two of this paper, the main needs of this group are;

1. Access to information about local labour market conditions and opportunities
2. Meeting service gaps related to employment and language programs as well as other settlement services;
3. Access to social and professional networks;
4. Access to financial assistance;
5. Access to fair and equitable hiring and promotion.

The following sub-sections describe the types of policies, strategies and programs that are needed in Peel to reduce risks associated with inadequate labour market integration and to address the service gaps identified in the previous section.

Each of the five needs identified above is considered separately. Addressing the various types of access barriers – informational, financial, linguistic, cultural and systemic – is key to the success of all interventions. Promising solutions and strategies also need to both address need and incorporate existing individual and community strengths and assets. These are provided below along with examples from other jurisdictions.

### **1. Access to information about local labour market conditions and opportunities**

Immigrant professionals need access to clear, up-to-date, occupation-specific, labour market information and guidance on licensing, employment and education procedures that can help them in their route to employment. This information should be tailored and practical and come from official sources. It should be specific to their local labour markets. It should also be available in plain language or their first language and be available immediately upon arrival or, better yet, prior to arrival.

A one-stop access point or central clearinghouse for information provision is important to help immigrants obtain access to all the necessary, current and consistent information they require. To begin, the Internet is an excellent route for distributing such information. A virtual “one-stop shop” should contain a central point of contact and links to related information and appropriate navigation aids. In addition, a physical or Regionally-based one-stop shop existing as a central point of intake would provide assessment, delegation and referral services to immigrants as well as identify Region-wide settlement and language priorities, coordinate the efforts of the service infrastructure and advise on harmonizing service offerings (Interquest Consulting 2006, p. 9).

An essential component of creating one-stop virtual or concrete resource centres is advertising and marketing their existence to newcomers. With the proliferation of websites in particular, newcomers may never find the best information sources. The provision of accurate and timely information is particularly important, as research indicates that family and friends are often the most common sources of information for newcomers, not government or settlement agencies.

Based on research and analysis in this area, we suggest that the Region of Peel:

#### Advocate

- For improved information provision to would-be migrants about the labour market realities in Canada, including for persons seeking to work in the regulated professions and trades, so that they can “hit the ground running” upon arrival.

#### Collaborate with Local Service Providers:

- To access and utilize settlement.org and other provincial and national sources of information
- To monitor initiatives in York Region around information and service provision, namely the York Region Welcome Centre.

### Implement and/or Support Regional Policies and Programs:

- That promote community awareness of existing services and websites.
- The Region of Peel is in the process of developing its own web portal. The content should be comprehensive and include Peel-specific information including what is unique to Peel and its labour market conditions. It should be in plain language, easy to navigate, available in multiple languages and interesting.

### Promising Examples

- National: “Going to Canada” web portal, operating since 2005, provides information to would-be immigrants who have access to the Internet and are able to find the portal.
- Ontario: For general settlement information, settlement.org and ontarioimmigration.ca. For internationally trained and educated individuals wishing to enter professional practice in Ontario, the Global Experience Ontario (GEO) resource centre provides information in person, by telephone and online and is also available for immigrants prior to arrival in Ontario. For internationally educated health professionals, the [Access Centre for Internationally Educated Health Professionals](#) specifically serves the 23 Health professions in the province.
- [Regional: York Region](#) has its own immigrant portal. It is also home to the [York Region Welcome Centre](#), a recently launched coordinated service delivery model. Five major agencies that provide help to immigrants have come together to be located under one roof. Services offered by the Welcome Centre include settlement and integration services, language training, accreditation and qualifications assistance and employment supports. While this model contains many advantages, it is still new, and there has not been any evaluation thus far. Future research should follow this example to determine its success and its impact and usefulness in assisting immigrants.

## **2. Meeting service gaps related to employment and language programs and other settlement services**

Settlement programs must adequately prepare immigrants for educational, language and skill requirements today’s job market within a knowledge economy. There is considerable variation among existing immigrant employment initiatives. They are funded by different levels of government or private institutions or foundations and offered through settlement or employment agencies, employers or various educational institutions.

In November 2005, the federal and Ontario governments signed a Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA). Under this agreement, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) will invest \$920 million in new funding over the next five years for settlement and language training programs and services in Ontario. To guide this investment, the Governments of Canada and

Ontario are developing joint settlement and language training strategies to help support the successful social and economic integration of immigrants in Ontario.

Although COIA marks a significant step forward for settlement in this province, Canada's major employment services continue to be funded by the EI program, and individuals are only eligible if they have a prior attachment to the labour market in Canada. However, with the implementation of both the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) and Labour Market Agreement (LMA) in Ontario, and the reframing of Employment Ontario, there are opportunities for input into the revised service delivery model.

Government policy and programming for immigrants is focused primarily on initial needs, such as basic shelter, orientation and language instruction. However, economic immigrants require more specialized settlement services over and above generic settlement programs. After the initial settlement phase, they need services to assist in evaluating their credentials, accessing licensure or certification programs, examinations and targeted employment programs.

Immigrant serving agencies should not have responsibility for all aspects of helping newcomer settlement. Mainstream service providers in health care, education and social services are responsible to all residents, including newcomers. Yet they are often ill-equipped to serve the needs of diverse newcomer communities.

Regarding language, in 2001, 37.5 % of Peel's population reported speaking a language other than English or French as their mother tongue. As such, many individuals are required to learn English as a second (or other) language in order to integrate into Peel workplaces. At the same time, employers need to recognize the value that employees who have languages other than English or French play in responding to the needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse customer base.

Research on highly educated and trained immigrant professionals indicates that these immigrants require a higher level of language training than is currently available. Furthermore, occupation-specific language training linked with bridge training and placement opportunities has shown to be more successful for these immigrants. Examples of these types of programs appear below.

Many immigrants are culturally unprepared to cope with new labour market rules and conventions. Cultural norms inform Canadian perspectives in workplaces and in the job search process. In the job search process, immigrants may be unfamiliar with the resumé and interview process. They also may be unaware of the importance of networking, as these may not be as important to employment-seekers in their places of origin. Immigrants may also be unable to translate their experience in ways that employers can recognize in terms of applicability to Canadian workplaces. Realistically, immigrants' educational background and work experience may not be directly applicable to all Canadian workplaces.

After a person secures employment, cultural differences continue to be important. Knowledge of appropriate interactions and verbal communication in the workplace have been identified as important areas of learning for newcomers (Conference Board of Canada 2004, p. 4). Many immigrants have indicated that they didn't realize the differences in terms of the culture, context, and practise of their profession.

Professional educational bridging programs are specifically designed to assist new immigrants who have completed their basic professional education in other countries and require additional education and/or training to meet Canadian licensing requirements and professional standards. The goal is to promote their rapid integration into the Canadian system through the acquisition of cultural, technical and literacy competency and also to provide the knowledge immigrants from other countries require to practise in Ontario workplaces. Good programs also provide placement opportunities and access to mentors to help immigrants gain Canadian experience.

Lastly, studies show that immigrants may be more religious than Canadian-born. Thus they may rely more on religious organizations than mainstream organizations for assistance. In a study of the Chinese community Wei Da (2008) found that religious participation helped immigrant women find mutual support concerning child care. For example, several participated in a self-organized child care support group among immigrant women in the church. Religious participation also provided emotional comfort and psychological support to some women that helped them to deal with various problems generated in the process of immigration and settlement.

The pattern of religious participation resulting from immigration is associated with the barriers and difficulties facing these immigrant women, and the phenomenon of religious participation in a mainline church was positively seen as something that could help immigrants to integrate more easily into mainstream society (Da, 2008, p. 5). This report also shows the instrumental role of the Chinese community in helping its members to settle in the new country (Da, 2008, p. 5).

Based on research and analysis in this area, we suggest that the Region of Peel:

#### Advocate

- For increased access to training dollars for newcomers who do not have an employment history in Canada. With the implementation of both the LMDA and LMA in Ontario, and the reframing of Employment Ontario, it is an optimal time for municipalities and regions to become vocal advocates for ensuring that services are re-structured to better serve local needs.
- For increased provision of programs that focus on later stages of settlement and adaptation, especially around employment issues, e.g. credential evaluation, accessing licensure or certification programs, examinations and targeted employment programs.
- For more opportunities for newcomers to achieve a higher degree of language proficiency before arriving in Canada.
- For more consistent pre-migration language assessments.



- For the removal of permanent residency requirement to access Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada classes. These discriminate against women who may already have Canadian citizenship by the time they can access language instruction.
- For ongoing support to bridge training initiatives.

#### Collaborate with Various Service Providers:

- To implement services that address longer-term needs as immigrants attempt to start their own businesses or gain employment.
- To better integrate newcomer needs into mainstream service delivery models, including adoption of diversity and enhanced awareness of immigrant issues among frontline staff, so that newcomers are not always relegated to settlement agencies.
- To link language training and employment for on-the-job learning opportunities. In many fields, structured workplace experience (such as internship) is a requirement for licensure/registration and the course could help candidates meet this need
- To link language training to bridge training courses.
- To provide online language training and distance learning for potential newcomers and newcomers who cannot access central locations.
- To build more flexibility into language program access.
- To adopt a service provision framework that is oriented to the learner, targeting language training to specific target groups, professions or language objectives (Interquest Consulting 2006, p. 7).

While there is no one-size-fits-all model for bridging programs, research has indicated that the following program components are essential for successful bridging programs (Austin, 2008). Peel could advocate and facilitate more programs that;

- Involve partnerships between employers, educators, regulators, professional associations, governments and community/settlement agencies;
- Engage employers, throughout the program to optimize post-program connections by providing direct opportunities for employers to recruit and hire graduates of bridging programs, and to enable employers to gain insight into the appropriateness of their own recruitment and hiring practices;

- Offer shorter modular courses or sessions that allow students to upgrade specific skills, instead of requiring a repeat of their initial professional education (Alboim, Finnie and Meng 2005; CIITE 2004);
- Offer appropriate intake and assessment in language and content expertise based on prior learning assessment procedures (see below), and meaningful assessment with direction and feedback for those who are not eligible for the program;
- Include content that integrates language support/training with technical/professional skills/competencies (while occupation specific language training is a component it is not the sole objective, see ELT below);
- Include peer-networking to allow learners an opportunity to connect with others having the same experience in navigating the Canadian workplace. Formal and informal peer-networking systems allow for sharing, venting and exchange of stories, all of which are essential components of support during this potentially stressful time.

Partnerships to improve programming and reduce competition for funds could also be explored. Proposed collaborative groups need to include regulatory bodies, post-secondary institutions, government representatives, NGOs, community service agencies and potential employers.

#### Implement and/or Support Regional Policies and Programs;

- That provide information in a variety of languages and formats.
- That provide information about services and resources to religious organizations engaging in outreach to newcomers.
- That develop ties to religious communities with high newcomer populations.

#### Promising Examples

- [Accreditation Assistance Access Centre](#) (AAAC) for Internationally Trained Professionals and Trades People. The AAAC is an employment assistance service, operated by York Region Neighbourhood Services Inc. Through this centre professional immigrants can get an interview with an Accreditation Facilitator, assistance developing an accreditation portfolio, receive individual instruction and group workshops on licensure and certification processes and counselling on pursuing alternatives to licensing career options.

- [The Enhanced Language Training \(ELT\) Program for Internationally Educated Health Professionals](#). The International Pharmacy Graduate Program seeks to develop language training for internationally trained pharmacists and other internationally educated health professionals. This program helps develop the language skills necessary to communicate within a health profession in Canada and to prepare for entry to the IPG Program. This program is offered free of charge to qualified individuals.
- Skills for Change Newcomer Professionals at Work (NPW). In addition to traditional Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programming, Skills for Change offers language upgrading for engineers, technicians and technologists and language upgrading course for internationally educated teachers.
- Language and Bridging Training in Australia. By the early 1990s, Australia had developed the world's most comprehensive settlement services for skilled migrants, located primarily in Sydney and Melbourne (the major immigrant-receiving sites). English courses were free and migrants were paid to take them, supported by immediate access to social security benefits. The Australian government simultaneously invested heavily in employment and credential recognition bridging programs, supported by payment of additional incentive allowances (Hawthorne 2005, 1994). Ten different models of bridging courses were developed for engineers. This major investment in language and employment settlement services for disadvantaged groups in Australia is what Hawthorne (2008) believes has contributed to lower unemployment rates in that country.

### **3. Access to Social and Professional Networks**

Although immigrants have their own extensive ethnic networks, they often lack the social networks that can link them to information about quality job opportunities. Not being connected to broader social and professional networks is a significant disadvantage in a society such as Canada's that rewards networking.

Mentorships are one means of optimizing the human capital immigrants bring with them and exploiting the transferable skills of underemployed immigrants in Peel. Working from the premise that change happens one person at a time, mentorship programs are a simple, straightforward means of improving the employment prospects of newcomers. The objective is to give skilled newcomers the connections and knowledge that can only be gained from experience in the workforce. In the program, new immigrants are matched with mentors who share the same profession.

In general, research has shown the success of mentorship programs (e.g., Weston and Nikolova, 2008). In focus groups of visible minorities run by the Conference Board of Canada, participants said that mentors had been instrumental to their professional development. Other research in this area found that racial minorities who were most successful in their careers almost always have a strong network of mentors (Conference Board of Canada 2004, p. 6).

Based on research and analysis in this area, we suggest that the Region of Peel:

Advocate:

- For sustainable funding, education and training for mentors and mentees, resources for incentives to mentors, and for addressing issues around establishing a common pool of mentors.

Collaborate with Various Service Providers:

- To ensure the availability of bridging programs that provide students with access to a social network of friendships with classmates.
- To encourage mentorship programs that can provide access to a network of potential employers.
- To explore the option of consolidating existing mentorship programs into a large program so that databases can be expanded and shared to make better matches between mentors and mentees and avoid competition between service provider organizations.

Implement and/or Support Regional Policies and Programs:

- That provide resources and encouragement to Region of Peel employees to become mentors.

For further suggestions in this area, see also Region Discussion Paper *Social Cohesion, Social Exclusion, Social Capital*.

Promising examples:

- Mentoring Partnership, operating in Toronto and outlying regions of Peel and York. In this program, mentors share their knowledge and experience by giving 24 hours of their time over a four-month period to help their mentee navigate the job search process. This program is currently being expanded for province-wide delivery and will be funded under the new Employment Ontario service delivery framework.

#### **4. Access to Financial Assistance**

The initial process of settling in a new place is a very costly endeavor. Research has also shown that it takes considerable time for immigrants to find a good job in their new destination. As their savings run out, immigrants tend to take any job, even if it does not utilize their human capital. Research shows that once an immigrant takes this non-relevant job, he or she is less likely to find a job in his or her occupation. Financial support to newcomers so that they can improve their language skills and focus on finding employment without worrying about the need to support their families can help immensely.

In particular, immigrants may face expenses related to accessing their profession. These include coursework needed to upgrade or get recognition for previous education, licensing examination fees and study materials, and the like. Loan programs to cover these expenses can be the motivating factor enabling a newcomer to work in his or her field.

Based on research and analysis in this area, we suggest that the Region of Peel:

Advocate:

- For financial institutions to revise their policies and help recent immigrants obtain access to small employment-oriented loans.
- For stipends to support immigrants while they are involved in bridging programs, including coop or internship programs.

Collaborate with Various Service Providers:

- To explore micro-financing options with local credit unions and community agencies, with the goal of encouraging entrepreneurs.
- To offer budgeting and financial management modules as a component of settlement and employment preparation classes.

Collaborate with Employers:

- To financially support international students or immigrant employees. Such support may take the form of unrestricted scholarships or bursaries, but more frequently involve some form of return-to-service agreement. Such agreements are contracts in which an employer agrees to pay tuition and other direct program costs in exchange for an agreement by the student to work for that employer for a fixed period of time (Austin, 2008).

Promising Examples

- Immigrant Employment Loans from the Maytree Foundation. The Maytree Foundation in Toronto has the most established immigrant loan program. In 2006, of the 90 loans that had been granted, there had been only four defaults, a lower default percentage than is usually experienced by commercial banks (Wayland 2006, p. 27). Loans of up to \$5,000 cover an assessment of credentials, examination and professional association fees.
- Immigrant Access Fund of the Calgary Foundation. More recently, the Calgary Foundation created the Immigrant Access Fund with the objective of providing microloans for the accreditation, training and upgrading of internationally trained immigrants. Loans of up to \$5,000 cover an assessment of credentials, examination and professional association fees.

## **5. Access to Fair and Equitable Hiring and Promotion**

Employers have a large part to play in providing access to opportunities for newcomers to gain the Canadian experience and exposure to Ontario workplace procedures newcomers lack. However, cross-cultural misunderstandings and misplaced perceptions and expectations on both sides can stand in the way of newcomers' success in the labour market. Furthermore, employers have indicated that the needs of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are not currently met by existing immigration-related programs. Many SMEs do not have human resource departments or staff, thus existing programs do not work as well because of their heavy reporting requirements and red tape (Canadian and Labour Business Centre 2005).

Internships can be one means of access the labour market. On the obvious level they provide the Canadian work experience that so many immigrant professionals claim as a major access barrier. They also provide on-the-job orientation, communication and Ontario-specific workplace procedures. They can also provide access to networks and contacts for other positions.

Occupational regulatory bodies are important stakeholders in the area of access to the professions for internationally educated individuals. Major tensions exist between the societal need to meet the increasing demand for skilled workers and the regulatory bodies entrusted with the duty to protect the public by ensuring high standards within the professions. However, there are certain things occupational bodies can be encouraged to do to facilitate access to licensure and certification and they are making progress in this area. After years of discussion, the passage of Ontario Bill 124 provides a strong starting point for improving access.

Peel could advocate for policies and programs that equip immigrants and visible minorities with the tools needed to succeed in the Canadian labour market on the one hand, and educate employers about the values of a diverse workforce on the other. Citizenship education and legislative measures are necessary to reduce discriminatory behaviour. Policies, coupled with public education, can improve public and employer acceptance of diversity.

Employer education is an important part of utilizing immigrants' human capital. Education and awareness programs are needed to address employers' unwillingness to recognize professional status and foreign experience as well as employers' ignorance and biases about newcomers' assets and potential contribution to the work place and the Canadian economy. Education programs are also needed to raise awareness around ethnic and racial biases and to introduce sensitivities to cultural diversity into places of work (Interquest Consulting 2006, pp. 6-7).

Education is needed to sensitize employers to the knowledge and experience internationally trained professionals bring and the barriers faced by internationally trained professionals in accessing appropriate employment opportunities so that they can appreciate the skills and assets that newcomers can bring to their company and team.

Multistakeholder initiatives that bring together the private sector, government and community groups have had some success. Since 2003, Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) has sought to identify implement local solutions that would lead to more effective and efficient labour market integration of immigrants in the Toronto region.

Other stakeholder groups represented within TRIEC include labour, occupational regulatory bodies, post-secondary institutions, and assessment service providers. The Council aims to increase access to value-added services that support labour market integration of skilled immigrants; work with key stakeholders, particularly employers, to build their capacity in recognizing and valuing immigrant skills; and, work with governments to increase local coordination and collaboration in planning and programming around this issue.

There are other immigrant employment-focused organizations that could serve as sources of information and ideas for Peel Region. One example is Ontario Regulators for Access (ORA), a group of Ontario regulatory bodies who “engage deliberately and strategically in developing and designing proactive approaches to internationally trained professionals seeking access to self-regulated professions in Ontario” ([www.regulators4access.ca](http://www.regulators4access.ca)). The benefit of such a group is that they can collaborate on initiatives. ORA has a subgroup for the health professions.

Based on research and analysis in this area, we suggest that the Region of Peel:

Advocate:

- For reducing barriers to entering the professions and trades, including ongoing enforcement of the 2006 Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act.
- For occupational regulatory bodies to become involved in activities that facilitate access to licensure and employment for immigrant professionals, namely more fair, transparent, equitable, cost-appropriate, timely licensing processes
- For the federal government to work with occupational regulatory bodies to facilitate access to pre-immigration assessment opportunities.

Collaborate with Employers in Peel Region:

- To encourage programs in which employers can play a role in giving immigrants experience in their fields of expertise as well as expose employers to the benefits and values of employing immigrants, including access to networking opportunities, mentorships, work placements and internships.
- To take on internationally educated interns.
- To provide resources for diversity training in the workplace.
- To encourage workplace supports or orientations for recent immigrants.
- To strengthen the local objectives of TRIEC in Peel to enhance outreach to and capacity building of employers in the Region.
- To work with organizations such as Ontario Regulators for Access.

### Implement and/or Support Regional Policies and Programs:

- That support internships and mentorships within the Region of Peel as an employer.
- That educate the public about the skills immigrants bring.
- That provide HR assistance to SMEs to facilitate hiring of newcomers.
- That translate information about complaint processes, workplace rights and collective agreements covering Peel employees into various languages, and offer workshops on these topics.

### Promising Examples:

- The Ontario Public Service Internship Program for Internationally Trained Individuals places qualified newcomers in six-month paid assignments in the Ontario Public Service.
- Career Bridge. Career Bridge internships are paid positions that last for four, six, nine or 12 months for job-ready immigrants that are legally able to work in Canada. This program was launched by TRIEC, and has had an 87% success rate of helping immigrants find appropriate full-time employment (Wayland, 2007a).
- Basic Education for Skills Training (BEST) program was negotiated by the CAW with the Big Three auto companies. This program is funded out of contract agreements with these employers and delivers basic literacy and ESL to participants for up to four hours a week for 37 weeks. Some of the participants are foreigntrained workers. Other unions are also using the BEST program.
- The CAW also sponsors a sensitivity program called Building Respectful Workplaces, which deals with respecting fellow workers. This program, which promotes respect and equity in the workplace, is also funded through negotiated agreement with employers. The union has also undertaken some collective agreement translation; in one case the collective agreement was translated to Vietnamese at the union's expense.

In conclusion, to implement all the strategies mentioned above, many players must be involved. Employers, different levels of government, educational institutions and occupational regulatory bodies all have a part to play in facilitating access to employment. Peel could act as a facilitator to encourage and bring together stakeholders in order to better meet the needs of immigrants.

There is no single template or blueprint for local coordination (Wayland 2007a, p. 9). As such, Peel could encourage more multistakeholder approaches that build on locally developed solutions. Bringing its own stakeholders together as partners to develop the appropriate analysis and subsequent approaches, solutions and strategies, grounded in the real conditions of the local community, is essential for success.



## 4.2 Improved Family and Community Supports

Multi-level strategies to help parents secure appropriate employment will benefit their children's educational, social and employment outcomes. But these are not the only solutions. In this section, we focus on strategies aimed at family and community-level supports that will benefit children and youth. The second generation can enjoy successful educational, economic and social outcomes: 1) when parents support their children academically, value education or promote an academically oriented home environment; 2) when communities support children through strong social capital bonds such as close community ties or supportive peer/adult mentors; and 3) when accessible educational and community institutions exist in communities to meet local needs in an integrated fashion. With these supports in place, “ethnic resilience” can overcome the stressors placed on families due to poverty, exclusion and lack of human capital recognition.

Supports that strengthen families and communities can help mitigate the stressors that impinge on family relationships and support children and youth success in society (McMurtry and Curling, 2008). Research from the U.S., Australia and the U.K. - all countries that are regarded as similar to Canada - highlight the benefits of strong community and family supports for helping youth become connected and engaged in broader society (Smith Family, 2008). These benefits were also highlighted in the recent major report on the roots of youth violence in Ontario (McMurtry and Curling, 2008). Building on these findings and others described in this section, we also call for more collaborative solutions that work to support families and strengthen communities.

It is recognized from the onset that schools have a large part to play in addressing these issues since schools are often the first and largest point of community contact for immigrant families. Schools are located where families live, and they are where children spend most of their young lives. Education can be an excellent mechanism used to develop family and community capacity and foster social inclusion. Schools can educate the children of immigrant parents directly, they can help parents integrate into communities, create a welcoming society and build civic engagement and community cohesion.

Investments focusing on education’s pivotal role in community regeneration have been shown to help all community members, not just children (Pelletier and Corter, 2005). When schools have been reconceived as community hubs or repositioned and expanded to offer integrated services to whole communities, the needs of disadvantaged children and their parents can be met in a holistic manner that strengthens the capacity of families and communities and also improves the educational outcomes for children. Using the school as a hub for access to and delivery of services makes sense from a fiscal standpoint and from an ease-of-access standpoint (Pelletier and Corter, 2005, p. 31; McMurtry and Curling, 2008, p.26, vol.2). These hubs can anchor communities, facilitating connections and networks within them.

While schools alone cannot mitigate the negative impacts of social exclusion, strategies that expand the view of education beyond traditional notions of schooling, such as using schools as a social service agency to reach immigrant families, making schools hubs of their communities, and helping parents get involved in their children’s education are essential. Combining the respective strengths of various organizations and individuals can provide a holistic foundation for facilitating social inclusion (Smith Family, 2008).

### **Summary of main needs**

In order to improve supports to families and communities and begin to tackle the issues of intergenerational relations, four main areas should be recognized and addressed by the Region of Peel. They include:

1. Enabling newcomer parents to better support their children academically;
2. Enabling newcomer parents to provide emotional and social supports to their children;
3. Mitigating the effects of poverty;
4. Building community social capital.

The subsections below contain a general overview of each of these four areas and describe how various policies, programs and strategies can support families and communities so as to maximize the success of children. While the needs are addressed separately in subsections, it is evident that they are interrelated. We endorse a strategic approach that addresses all the needs of families and communities in an integrated way. Promising examples from other jurisdictions highlight models of how this can be achieved.

### **1 Enabling newcomer parents to better support their children academically**

Research indicates undeniably that parental engagement in many forms has an impact on student academic achievement as measured in many different ways, including grades, standardized test scores and teacher ratings, for all groups of children across culture, background and situations (Henderson and Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005). The most significant contributors to children’s academic achievement are: 1) having high expectations of children; and 2) creating an educationally-oriented environment (Jeynes, 2005). Parent involvement can be especially beneficial for improving achievement for children at risk. According to a recent study by Turney and Kao (2006, p. 1), “parental involvement at home and in school has a substantial effect on closing the achievement gap between White and minority students, and that these reductions are most substantial among children of foreign-born parents.”

While the direct benefits of parental involvement to children are obvious, there are also benefits to immigrant parents themselves, such as learning about public education in Ontario, building community and citizen engagement and developing more effective parenting (People for Education 2008). When parents are taught to effectively engage with schools and advocate for their families, it helps set the stage for other types of community engagement as well (Colorado Department of Education, 2007, p. 48).

However, parents from minority groups and those with little formal education face many barriers to full involvement in their children's schooling, including lack of child care, inflexible work schedules, limited income and lack of transportation to participate in school programs and events. Many parents are also self-conscious about their levels of schooling, feel uncomfortable in institutional settings, and fear that they are not educated enough to be helpful in the classroom or to even approach the school and educators within it (Lareau, 1987; Moles, 1993; Parker et al., 1996; as cited in Lahaie, 2008). These issues may be compounded in newcomer families. As noted in the recent report on youth violence in Ontario:

Parents who are recent immigrants or refugees dealing with urgent settlement problems may not be able to turn their attention to the difficulties their children are having in school, or they may be unable to help because they cannot communicate with the teachers or are reticent to engage with authority figures. Schools often lack the capacity to help them adjust or the creative outreach that would make them feel welcome (McMurtry and Curling, 2008, p.12, vol .2)

There are many barriers that prevent newcomer parents from being able to fully support their children academically at school. The following types of barriers have been recognized in various research articles (see Stagg Peterson, & Ladky, 2007; Lahaie, 2008):

- Lack of information about the school system and pedagogical practices in Canada
- Systemic barriers, e.g., institutional racism, that devalue other educational practices and learnings, and maintain the status quo
- Linguistic, cultural, financial, educational and systemic barriers that deter immigrant parents from connecting to and participating in school activities.

Addressing barriers that prevent newcomer parents from being able to fully support their children academically at school requires advocacy, collaboration (especially with schools) and Regional/municipal initiatives.

Whenever possible, strategies addressing these barriers should be implemented for parents with young children. If they are engaged at this point in the life cycle, the impacts may last over a lifetime. Schools must play a large part in promoting the benefits of parents' engagement in their children's education. They can offer multilingual materials such as information/tip sheets and workshops to address the need for information and encourage engagement. They can also provide direct multilingual support to assist parents in getting involved and supporting their children. Schools that embrace a philosophy of partnership and have a comprehensive approach to ongoing communication can maximize parent engagement and its contribution to improved student achievement (Henderson and Mapp, 2002).

The more welcome parents feel in schools, the more likely they will be willing to engage in their children's education and the more likely all students and communities will be successful. At the same time, it should be recognized that schools are already under pressure to deliver an increasing range of services and should be given policy, human and financial supports to do so (Kugler and Flessa, 2007).

For example, schools could employ communication liaison positions to broker between parents and educators. Ideally, these individuals would have ethnic identities that reflect those in the community.

Community-based agencies also have an important role to play. For example, they can provide workshops, tip sheets and information to parents about becoming engaged in their children's education. Organizations such as People for Education, the Toronto based Campaign for Public Education and the Canadian Educational Association build capacity and engage parents on education issues that typically translate into heightened civic engagement. These organizations empower and motivate parents who may not have had the opportunity to be engaged, or did not know the Canadian cultural norms about how to become involved or become aware about politics and political issues in education.

Based on research and analysis in this area, we suggest that the Region of Peel:

Advocate:

- For antiracism and equity policies in schools.
- For hiring policies that encourage bi/multilingual staff in schools.

Collaborate with Schools

- To reduce systemic barriers and increase accessibility and reception of schools, e.g., employment of bilingual and bicultural staff, ensuring materials about the school are available in several languages of the community, signage in multiple languages, newcomer orientation weeks, and employment of peer mentors or ambassadors of the same language or gender who can introduce newcomers to the school.
- To support/provide workshops and conferences for parents about getting engaged in their children's education. Some of these conferences are available in multiple languages. For example, this year the Peel District School Board hosted its seventh annual parent conference to understanding the school system with workshops on boosting children's reading. The board also produces resources such as tip sheets and fact sheets for parents in several languages. Other organizations such as People for Education also offer tip sheets, conferences and a phone line where parents can call for help with their children and about navigating the school system.
- To expand programs such as the Newcomer Orientation Weeks to all schools with significant immigrant populations.

Collaborate with other community organizations, e.g., mainstream and ethno-specific agencies as well as faith-based organizations:

- To promote the benefits of parental engagement in children's education in many languages and using multiple formats, e.g., workshops, tip sheets and assistance with how to get involved, in order to provide information and engage parents in their children's education. These may include attending various school events, volunteering in the classroom, following their children's progress at school and helping them at home with homework and projects.

Implement and/or Support Regional Policies and Programs

- To enhance Early Years Centres and similar services and reduce access barriers by improving programs to better meet immigrants needs, for example, hiring multilingual staff, training staff in cultural sensitivity and offering materials in multiple languages.
- To provide informational to newcomers about the education system in Canada in multiple languages and in multiple venues.
- To inform and engage parents in their children's education. For example, assist organizations that inform and engage parents on education issue such as People for Education, the Toronto-based Campaign for Public Education and the national Canadian Education Association.
- Such as library programs that provide information and engage newcomer parents in their children's education. Local libraries offer services to parents and their children to encourage literacy and a love of reading. Drop-in programs for children and their caregivers provide opportunities to hear stories and participate in early literacy games.

Promising Examples

- Early Years Centres. [Ontario Early Years Centres](#) are free drop-in centres that help parents with young children (aged 0-6). Trained staff and volunteers offer parents/caregivers services, programs and activities that develop parenting skills, provide information and referral to other community programs and support early literacy.

There are more than 100 centres across Ontario. An evaluation of the Peel program revealed positive benefits for parents, children, schools and communities, despite the fact that staff reported the need for more multicultural training and improvements in facilities and equipment. Evaluations from other jurisdictions show that families living in poverty are hard to reach through these centres for many reasons, and that a more concerted effort is needed to reach these communities (Social Planning Council of Ottawa, 2007, p. 63). Evening and weekend parent workshops and greater collaboration between the centres and schools that house them were suggested improvements. In sum, the centres can serve as successful examples of integrated models that build stronger community ties and enhance home and school connections.

- **HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters).** HIPPY is a school readiness program developed in Israel to maximize, through early intervention, the educational potential of young children in low-income families. The program is premised on a transfer of knowledge and literacy skills from the mother to her children and to other immigrant women (CLBC, 2005, p. 30). A Vancouver-based pilot project administered through Simon Fraser University consisted of a six-month literacy program for immigrant women leading to a certificate from the university. In 2005, Working Women Community Centre (WWCC) became the first Ontario site for HIPPY. Bill and Hillary Clinton have been major supporters of the program in the United States.
- Parent conferences and workshops. Schools sometimes offer workshops and conferences to parents about getting involved in their children's education. Some of these conferences are available in multiple languages. For example, this year the Peel District School Board hosted its seventh annual parent conference with workshops on topics as diverse as boosting children's reading skills and understanding the school system. The board also produces resources such as tip sheets and fact sheets for parents in several languages. Other organizations such as People for Education also offer multilingual tip sheets, conferences and a phone line parents can call for help with their children or for help navigating the school system.
- [People for Education](#) is a parent- led charitable organization begun in 1996 that works to support public education in Ontario. Part of its mandate includes is to provide information and support about the school system, educating parents and encouraging them to get involved in their children's education. Parents have access to support line and can also e-mail questions. Free tip sheets are available in 14 languages, in hard copy through the schools and electronically. The group also conducts a number of parent education activities; a parent inclusion network, which attempts to specifically target groups that feel excluded from such involvement; a listserv; an annual conference for parents; and publishes a bimonthly newsletter and other reports.

## **2. Enabling newcomer parents to provide emotional and social supports to their children**

Newcomer parents may not always be able to fully support their children emotionally and socially because they experience financial and other barriers that limit their involvement within the family and the community. The importance of having a caring adult to articulate, model and reinforce clear norms as well as to provide guidance is highlighted in Region Discussion Paper, *Meeting the Needs of Immigrants Throughout the Life Cycle*. Addressing youth's lack of access to a full-time parent role model - given that parents may be working multiple jobs and/or shift work - requires macro-level changes in labour force policies.

At the community level, policies and programs can be developed and supported that enable families to spend low-cost, quality time together. Research on the benefits of recreation programs for families has been well documented (Social Planning Council of Ottawa, 2007, p. 63). For example, a three-year study in the Hamilton region demonstrated clear spin-off savings from after-school recreation programs for families.

When children participate in these programs, there is a reduction in social assistance use, counseling and the need for health services by the whole family. Specifically, the results showed that providing children with access to free recreational programs coincided with 15% more exits from social assistance within one year. It also showed improvements in parent social adjustment levels (Browne, Byrne, Roberts, Boyle, Gafni, Watt and Offord, 2001). Other research has shown that arts and recreation programs positively affect child development, community participation, mentorship of community leaders and constructive social activity among youth (Torjman, 2008).

Despite these benefits, in recent years municipalities have increased user fees for recreational programs, schools are losing physical education teachers, parents are increasingly asked for fees for sports programs in schools, and community access to recreational programs have been reduced. As a result, there is less access to recreational programs that have been proven to positively affect families chances of success (People for Education 2008). People for Education's research also showed that, in Ontario, locations where the lowest percentage of schools charge fees have the highest percentage of schools reporting community use.

The research also showed that immigrant parents, especially those experiencing economic declines, benefit from services that are integrated and well-suited to their needs. "The idea is that bringing the whole range of social services together in one place will make services more available to those requiring them and will improve efficiency in service delivery" (Levin, 2005, p. 27). For example, some centres provide child care for preschoolers while older children are in school as the parents take a parenting class, employment or bridge training, ESL or another form of adult education; they also have the option of a recreational program afterwards.

Family literacy programs that encompass adult education, children's education, parent and child together and parent time can also strengthen immigrant families by addressing the needs of all its members. As mentioned previously, schools can be one place where this is achieved. "Integrated professional supports improve the quality of early childhood programs and reduce the risks for parents and children... Integrated program delivery is also cost-effective, service more families, more flexibly, for the same costs" (People for Education, 2008, p. 29). While appealing, it should be recognized that this idea is challenging and requires the work of many levels of government to implement effectively. In Ontario, a Ministry of Children and Youth Services exists as the lead for the province's poverty-reduction strategies. However, although the Ministry is responsible for "a cross-section of issues affecting young people, ... no Ministry or government department has been assigned to take the lead role on integration of services for children, youth and families" (People for Education, 2008a, p. 28).

One of the greatest misfortunes in immigrant communities is the breakdown of intergenerational communication and the disruption of family ties (Colorado Department of Education, 2007, p. 13). There are major stressors when families migrate from one country to another. Often this stress is exacerbated by well-meaning yet uninformed practices and policies. For example, children feel that they must lose their first language and culture in order to assimilate into new communities. When parents lose the ability to communicate with their children and become unable to impart their culture and shared beliefs, rifts develop and families lose the necessary intimacy and bonds that are needed for family cohesion.

There is evidence in American research that when immigrant children in urban areas abandon or reject their home language and culture, gang problems are aggravated and immigrant children's chances of success are inhibited (Colorado Department of Education, 2007, p. 13).

Maintaining and/or developing competency in one's first or heritage language is important in understanding culture, bridging intergenerational gaps and developing a healthy cultural identity (Ngo and Schliefer, 2005). There is also evidence that a bilingual background may provide immigrant children with the resources necessary to succeed in the educational system because it provides them with greater access to community networks and encourages effective communication with their parents (Glick and White, 2003; White and Glick, 2000).

However, findings from a recent study suggest that the effects of family language environment on academic achievement are different for non-Western and Western-origin groups, with minority-language retention not shown to be beneficial for Western-origin groups (Abada et al., 2008). In sum, many immigrant youth do not have opportunities to learn and practise their heritage languages, and many newcomer families mistakenly believe that they must lose their first language and culture in order to integrate into new communities.

Addressing barriers that prevent newcomer parents from being able to fully support their children emotionally and socially requires advocacy, collaboration (especially with schools and community organizations) and Regional initiatives.

Based on research and analysis in this area, we suggest that the Region of Peel:

Advocate:

- For expanded and secure federal and provincial funding for heritage language learning.
- For federal partners to provide more comprehensive settlement supports to high-needs populations such as government-assisted refugees, privately-sponsored refugees, and refugees determined inland.
- For a single Ministry or government department to take the lead role on integration of services for children, youth and families. Other provinces have established a Ministry responsible for Children (and youth), or have established interministerial groups to take responsibility for overseeing and coordinating such an approach.

Collaborate with Schools:

- To support/provide the use of positive messages about the importance of first language and culture and to encourage families to maintain their first language while they learn English. To develop programs and policies that educate parents about the cognitive value of bi/multilingualism and advocate for support for strategies that support, maintain and preserve home-language learning, such as reading to their children in their first language.



- To provide settlement services, on their premises, to parents and students (e.g. Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) Multicultural Liaison Officers). As schools exist at the centres of neighbourhoods and are easily accessible to the community, and since the majority of parents of young children come to schools daily, community services can be offered through schools, making them more familiar, accessible and effective.

#### Collaborate with Schools and Community Organizations:

- To foster partnerships that encourage, facilitate and enable the use of school space to meet the needs of the community. For example, early learning or child care programs, office or meeting rooms for non-profit organizations, health clinics, sports programs, family resource or seniors' centres, industry training, or branch libraries can all exist under one roof.

#### Implement and/or Support Regional Policies and Programs:

- To increase the accessibility (e.g., reduce costs, provide subsidies) of recreational and community arts programs.
- To foster collaboration between schools and social service agencies that serve immigrant communities.
- To support heritage language programs for parents and children. To assist Early Years Centres to better serve newcomer groups and families living in poverty.
- To ensure that services for newcomers are integrated and accessible.
- To provide culturally and linguistically accessible information on community recreation and arts programs.

#### Promising Examples:

- Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS). A school-based outreach program designed to help newcomer students and their families settle into their schools and communities. SWIS workers explain essential school information and refer newcomers to the appropriate school staff as necessary. The SWIS program has developed the Newcomers' Guides to Elementary and Secondary School, a series of handouts on key school topics. The guides are available in 18 languages and are posted at <http://www.settlement.org>. The program is already offered in Peel through the Peel Multicultural Settlement and Educational Partnership (MSEP). We recommend that it be continued and strengthened.
- Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO) partnerships between the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO) and several Ottawa-area school boards. (<http://www.ociso.org/>) These partnerships were formed to address the settlement needs of immigrant children and their families.

- The MLOs orient immigrant students and parents to the education system and to their roles and responsibilities, offering services in more than 20 languages. They encourage parents to get involved in the school, advocate for students and parents, provide language and cultural interpretation at meetings involving staff members, parents and students, contact parents about the educational and social development of their children, and keep them informed about events at the school.
- Newcomer orientation week. Several high schools in Toronto have implemented Welcome and Information for Newcomers (WIN) programs, offered prior to the start of the school year. One component is the use of peer mentors: student mentors, who often times are recent immigrants themselves, receive training and experience with assisting other newcomers. In this way the program benefits the mentors as well as newcomer students.
- Ottawa-Carleton Catholic District School Board (OCCSB) Family Welcome Centre Pilot Project. This initiative offers families a welcoming and supportive introduction to the school board's schools and community. Several services are offered at one central location, such as welcome and orientation to the OCCSB system; initial academic assessments (first language, English and mathematics); recommendations for placement and ESL program support; liaison with board and school staff and other settlement and community agencies in the Ottawa Carleton Region; information and referral to services that families may require; and ongoing contact for families using the Welcome Centre services. Offering several services under one umbrella through the school board is a wonderful way to reach families.
- U.K. Ministry of Schools, Families and Children. In the U.K. there is a single ministry responsible for schools, families and children. A report by Donald Hirsh, funded by the Child Poverty Action Group (2007), claims that this shows a commitment to tackling both poverty and educational disadvantage together.

### **3. Mitigating the effects of living in poverty**

Children's health and well-being is considered to be especially vulnerable to conditions associated with living in poverty (Canadian Institute on Children's Health, 2000; Ross and Roberts, 1999; Ross, Roberts & Scott, 2000). The impact of poverty on immigrant children, youth and families is discussed in greater detail in Region Discussion Paper, *Meeting the Needs of Immigrants Throughout the Life Cycle*. Advocacy, collaboration and Regional policies and programs are needed to ensure the accessibility and adequacy of income supports, housing, health care, and access to child care for all families.

### **4. Building community social capital**

Parental human capital may not be enough to explain the educational advantage among some immigrant groups, suggesting that social capital in the family and the immigrant community also plays an important role in accounting for group differences (Abada et al., 2008).

For example, the advantages among Asian Americans in the educational system have been attributed to a variety of social capital factors, such as supplementary education and language schools providing academic enrichment, teaching of family values, co-ethnic ties and opportunities for immigrants with varying levels of socioeconomic background to come together (Zhou and Kim, 2006). It has further been proposed that the greater the involvement in one's community and the tighter the ethnic community, the greater the conformity to the group's expectations, which in turn can help immigrants and their children overcome their structural disadvantages (Zhou, 1997).

On the other hand, ethno-community groups' characteristics and experiences of social exclusion may impede the successful integration of immigrant children and families. For example, collective experiences of discrimination may facilitate a defeatist attitude and/or provide a negative frame of reference for immigrant children, further contributing to downward assimilation (Portes and Zhou 1993; Ogbu 1991). Entrapment into the bottom of the economic stratum can also impose barriers for socioeconomic mobility of immigrant children (Perlmann and Waldinger 1997).

Although more research is necessary on the role of an immigrant group's social capital in relation to second-generation academic achievement, findings from a recent study suggested that both parental education and immigrant group social capital (defined in terms of group socioeconomic status) could be used to explain differences in academic achievement between immigrant groups, although the extent to which each exerted an impact varied between groups (Abada et al., 2008).

In addition to individual and family-level supports, research indicates that the most successful practice for integrating and retaining immigrants in the community requires a community support plan, whereby the whole community is involved – business, health care providers, religious organizations, educational groups, etc. (CLBC, 2005, p. 28). The neighbourhood or community is a variable in its own right that influences children's outcomes (Levin, 2005, p. 27). Neighbourhoods with stronger social supports and greater stability appear to have better outcomes for children, even controlling for other factors in children's backgrounds (Willms, 2003; as cited in Levin, 2005, p. 17). Building strong communities is thus another way to help families and children.

Schools contain assets that can be used to build communities. They can build connections between immigrants and longstanding residents, foster school-community links, and the buildings and staff themselves can be used for community outreach. According to People for Education (2008a, p.26), "Public Schools are an essential part of the social infrastructure of cities, increasingly recognized as important to the health of cities and pivotal to building inclusive cities and communities."

This conception of schooling requires an expanded view of education, one in which schools serve as hubs of their communities. This concept sees schools as deeply connected community hubs that do more than provide students with the academic basics or offer settlement services to immigrants or even open their doors to community programs. By combining all these objectives, schools build welcoming and inclusive communities, providing families who live there social and emotional support in addition to literacy and numeracy skills.

In order to truly live this ideal, schools must play a part in building the communities in their neighbourhood. They need to recognize and value their communities as assets. They can offer the space for volunteers and open their doors to the community as partners in their children's education. Strategies for combating social exclusion can exist through incorporating community knowledge into an inclusive and culturally responsive curriculum that is "rooted in the school and community world to which the students belong" (Portelli and Vibert, 2001). This type of curriculum is more engaging for students and their families, and it is also a mechanism for valuing marginalized groups, breaking down the barriers between the school and the world, and helping families succeed. When children see themselves reflected in the curriculum and staff, they are more likely to engage with schools and be successful.

Encouraging community use of schools for community benefit is a way to build community capital. In July 2004, the Ontario government announced a cooperative venture between the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, the Ministry of Education and school boards to help fund community use of schools (People for Education, 2008a). With declining enrollment and urban revitalization strategies, the timing is ripe for broadening the use of schools. On the one hand, this initiative is a way to offer community services through schools; it is also another way schools are opening their doors to the community and making residents feel welcome and valued in their neighbourhoods.

This, however, could not be done without facilities managers to operate the school on behalf of the community after school hours (McMurtry and Curling, 2008). According to People for Education (2007, p.23), evidence suggests that increasing public access to school buildings increases public engagement in the school system, and can set the stage for improved civic engagement.

Community groups also have a major role to play in empowering their communities and encouraging community development activities. (For more information on building community social capital, see Region Discussion Paper, *Meeting the Needs of Immigrants Throughout the Life Cycle*.) Settlement agencies can do more than offer settlement services to passive participants. They are ideally positioned to act as champions for this cause. Unfortunately, sometimes funding regulations stand in the way of community agencies offering advocacy or community capacity building services. We envision a role for settlement agencies that includes empowering communities through capacity-building activities.

The school and community groups can get communities involved in their children's education as a means toward more general community and civic engagement. McMurtry and Curling (2008) describe how engaging communities around the development of community hubs can be an ideal way to build stronger community networks of mutual support and involvement. These are most successful when members of the community take ownership of and ultimately govern the project. One researcher describes a project in which a school used principles of community economic development, e.g., hiring local people, purchasing local goods and services, supporting community efforts to improve housing or create jobs and helping to build community leadership as a means to explicitly build a strong community (Hunter, 2000; as cited in Levin, 2005, p. 27). Strong communities have children with improved developmental outcomes (Kohen, Brooks-Gunn, Leventhal and Hertzman, 2002; as cited in Pelletier and Corter, 2005).

Building social capital to enable communities to fully support immigrant parents and children requires advocacy, collaboration and Regional/municipal initiatives.

Based on research and analysis in this area, we suggest that the Region of Peel:

Advocate:

- For educational policies that support the development of schools as community hubs that do more than provide students with the academic basics but also provide families social and emotional support.
- For educational reforms that encourage schools/Ministry of Education to develop curricula that foster inclusive education.
- For the development of national and provincial policies to promote social inclusion.
- For funding that permits community groups to encourage civic engagement through activities that build community capacity and social capital.

Collaborate with Schools:

- To develop more inclusive and culturally responsive curricula. For example, in addition to offering ESL or valuing multilingual literacies, schools should offer a curriculum that is “rooted in the school and community world to which the students belong” (Portelli and Vibert, 2001).
- To develop strategies that focus on the creation of inclusive and welcoming communities.
- And with community organizations on strategies aimed at community engagement.
- To develop strategies aimed at building and supporting community-based organizations and partnerships between them.

### Implement and/or Support Regional Policies and Programs:

- That support community activities aimed at celebrating cultures and traditions as well as neighbourhoods.
- That address racism and discrimination through cross-cultural and anti-racism training/awareness and public education (Desai and Subramanian, 2000).
- That build community social capital.

### Promising Examples:

- Australia's Schools at the Centre (Smith Family, 2007).
- The Smith Family is endorsing a Schools at the Centre (SAC) model of education to build partnerships between schools and other community resources. They acknowledge that "schools are a natural centre for attracting and supporting parents." They believe schools are an asset with high potential to address the family and community dysfunction suffered in some remote communities. Since the physical and social infrastructure of schools remains underutilized, schools can serve as a hub to better support children and families. In their view, SAC would encourage Dual Generation Learning, a model that aims to reduce social exclusion and build social capital within communities. The model facilitates children and parents learning together by capitalizing on the commitment parents have to the well-being of their children. The Smith Family's Families Learning Together model encourages dual-generation learning in a way that meets individual developmental needs while also working to strengthen the way parents and children support and relate to each other as a family.
- Gathering under One Tree: In Conversation with Parents and Communities of Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Schools (John Ippolito). This collaboration between the Faculty of Education and the York Region District School Board facilitates a school-based discussion forum for teachers and administrators to tap into the resources that linguistic and cultural minority families bring to their children's public education. Its broad aim is to build relationships among varied stakeholders and appreciate the resources that the community holds.
- Saskatchewan Community Schools. These schools operate as centres of learning and hope for their families and communities. The diverse learning needs of children and youth are met by incorporating a comprehensive range of effective educational practices. Community Schools are responsive, inclusive, culturally affirming and academically challenging. The learning program and environment effectively build on strengths to address the needs of the communities they serve. As hubs for the delivery of an array of services and supports, they use collaborative approaches to achieve learning excellence and well-being for the entire community. In 2004, 12% of provincially funded Saskatchewan schools were designated Community Schools (Government of Saskatchewan, 2002).

- B.C. Neighbourhoods of Learning pilot project. In British Columbia, the provincial government announced \$30 million for a Neighbourhoods of Learning pilot project, which bring education and community services together in a single neighbourhood hub. Under this vision, schools and community organizations will create Neighbourhoods of Learning where people can access educational and community services under one roof. This initiative has the Vancouver school district working with community organizations to utilize an inclusive approach to designing and planning for the use of use of school space to meet the needs of the community. For example, early learning or child care programs, office or meeting rooms for non-profit organizations, health clinics, sports programs, family resource or seniors' centres, industry training, or branch libraries can all exist under one roof.

## 5 Conclusion

Granting newcomers a place in Canadian society involves basic notions of belonging, acceptance and recognition. This ideal, embodied in the term “social inclusion,” would entail for immigrants and refugees the “full and equitable participation in the economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions in their new country” (Omidvar and Richmond 2003, p. 1). To fail at social inclusion has costs to individuals in terms of settlement and mental health but also in broader ethnic and race relations and human rights terms. The poor economic outcomes experienced by many newcomers to Canada, particularly among racialized groups, points to significant cracks in the human capital model of migration, and in Canada’s efforts at social inclusion.

As Canada moves to emphasize shorter-term labour market goals in its immigration policy, successes in the second generation can help to draw attention back to the benefits of a longer-term focus on social inclusion and the needs of families (Corak 2008, p. 23). Younger immigrants and the children of immigrants on the whole can be proud of significant accomplishments in terms of education and earnings. However, persons from some backgrounds appear to be faring much better than others.

Even among those characterized by “success,” there are differences in perceptions of social inclusion within the second generation. According to Statistics Canada’s Ethnic Diversity Survey, visible minorities score lower in the second generation than they did in the first on many indicators of social cohesion and integration (such as trust, sense of belonging and perceived discrimination). This evidence suggests that, even if economic prospects are improving for many in the second generation, social inclusion is not improving (Reitz and Banerjee 2007).

Strategies to help families feel more welcome in their new communities and improve their prospects for success must take into account both tangible and intangible measures of inclusion. As well, they should acknowledge the significant heterogeneity within the second generation and the widespread variation in outcomes that is already apparent.

Given the underlying issues identified that affect the family’s ability to transfer its human capital to its children, the main ideas for meeting family needs are:

1. Improving labour market access for newcomer parents.
2. Meeting families’ needs through schools and an expanded view of education that sees its role as promoting and encouraging
  - a. Parental support for involvement in their children's education
  - b. Community program delivery in schools
  - c. Schools as community hubs
3. Mitigating the negative impacts of poverty/social exclusion on the family through
  - a. Improved income support programs
  - b. Affordable and appropriate housing
  - c. Affordable and accessible child care
  - d. Health promotion and prevention strategies



4. Building community social capital through community engagement and development strategies that entail accessible, relevant, comprehensive and integrated community programs

The strategies discussed above in the areas of improved labour market integration for newcomer parents and improved supports to families and communities can assist the Region of Peel to develop and implement policies and programs to address the needs of newcomer parents and families. The strategies address underlying issues in the lack of utilization of human capital across generations and will promote a more Livable Peel.

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