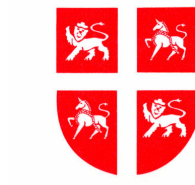




Report of Consultations on a Provincial Immigration Strategy

"What We Heard"
Fall 2005



GOVERNMENT OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment

INTRODUCTION

On June 28, 2005, the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment released a discussion document entitled: *An Immigration Strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador: Opportunity for Growth*.

The discussion document provided an overview of immigration in Canada, as well as in the Atlantic Provinces, and in Newfoundland and Labrador. Also included in the discussion document were a rationale for developing an immigration strategy, the challenges that need to be addressed, and the opportunities that are evident.

A copy of the discussion document can be found on the Department's website at:

<http://www.hrle.gov.nl.ca/hrle/publications/pdf/ImmigrationStrategy.pdf>

During the months of September and October, 2005, a series of stakeholder consultations were held throughout the province. Participants were invited to provide feedback on a series of questions which were designed to seek input into the development of an immigration strategy.

The general public was also invited to provide feedback on the discussion document by email or regular mail. Seventeen written submissions were received.

Participants at the consultation sessions represented educational institutions, economic development agencies, women's groups, business organizations, government departments, zonal boards, sponsors of refugees, church groups, municipalities, immigrant organizations, international students and youth groups.

Fourteen stakeholder consultation sessions were held. Multi-stakeholder groups were invited to 10 of the sessions which were held in the following locations:

- Happy Valley/Goose Bay
 Labrador City and Mary's Harbour (teleconference session)
- St. Anthony
- Corner Brook
- Stephenville
- Clarenville
- Marystown

- Carbonear
- Gander
- Grand Falls/Windsor
- St. John's

In addition, there were 3 sessions held in St. John's/Mount Pearl to which specific stakeholder groups were invited as follows:

- Business/Industry Stakeholders
- Women's Groups
- Education Stakeholders

Each session began with a presentation/overview of the discussion document. After the presentation, feedback was sought from participants on a number of questions. The feedback sessions were facilitated by Marie Keefe of the Centre for Learning and Development, Public Service Secretariat, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

WHAT WE HEARD

In some sessions, a few stakeholders expressed the view that more needs to be done to retain the youth of the province and to attract expatriates who wish to return. However, feedback was generally supportive of increased immigration and contained the following key messages:

1. SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PROVINCIAL IMMIGRATION STRATEGY AND THE CONTRIBUTIONS THAT IMMIGRANTS MAKE.

- Immigrants help to stimulate economic growth, and many start businesses which employ local residents.
- Many immigrants are innovative, creative and see opportunity for economic development that may have been overlooked.
- Immigrants bring connections to the global marketplace which can help local businesses increase exports of their products and services.
- Immigrants bring specialized skills and often take "difficult-to-fill" positions (e.g. rural physicians).

- Increased immigration can help to address demographic challenges (e.g. declining and ageing population, low birth rates and out-migration).
- Immigrants add to cultural diversity, bring new customs, foods, and ideas, enriching the lives of all citizens.

2. LACK OF AWARENESS AMONG THE GENERAL PUBLIC OF THE IMPORTANCE OF IMMIGRATION AND ITS POTENTIAL.

- Stakeholders expressed the view that there is a lack of awareness throughout the province of the benefits of immigration.
- Many stakeholders noted that the general public needed to be reminded of the contributions immigrants have made and continue to make.
- Some expressed the notion that immigrants wouldn't wish to settle here when our own population is leaving.
- Many stakeholders themselves were not aware of the Provincial Nominee Program and how it can be used to attract individuals with the particular skill sets needed in the province or those who wish to start a business or invest in an existing business.
- Most stakeholders were not aware that groups could privately sponsor refugees to settle in their communities.

3. LACK OF AWARENESS OF THE PROVINCE AS A DESIRABLE DESTINATION FOR PROSPECTIVE IMMIGRANTS - WE NEED TO PROMOTE THE PROVINCE.

- In addition to a lack of awareness, there are many myths and stereotypes about Newfoundland and Labrador and what the province has to offer immigrants.
- There is a need to promote the province as a desirable destination. A provincial immigration web site should be developed, as well as promotional materials for overseas posts, missions, and immigration fairs.
- The provincial government should promote Newfoundland and Labrador's attractive features and natural beauty, including the benefits of safe

communities, clean air and water, low crime rate, pristine wilderness areas, friendly people, vibrant culture, excellent education system, and a growing economy.

- The current immigration population should be engaged in strategies as a means to promote the province and to attract others to settle here.

4. FOCUS ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS.

- International students represent a potential pool of immigrants to the province. The strategy should include attracting more international students to study in the province and encouraging graduates to stay.
- International students are highly skilled, talented, and creative young people who have already adjusted to our culture and our weather, and have likely made friends and connections. Also, credential recognition is not an obstacle for them to access the local labour market.
- There is a need to make it easier for international graduates to find meaningful work and to start businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Education stakeholders are keen to work with the province on initiatives targeted at international students.

5. RETENTION IS KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY.

- Retention of immigrants already in the province should be a priority area, and the overall retention rate must be improved. More research needs to be done to determine why people stay or why they leave.
- Some noted that the strategy should include initiatives for those immigrants already here who are having difficulty integrating into the local labour market.
- Employers need to do their part by hiring immigrants, offering mentorship, and giving immigrants an opportunity to gain Canadian work experience.
- The province should develop multicultural and diversity hiring policies to ensure the public service is representative of the population it serves.

- Municipalities are key stakeholders in a successful immigration strategy as what happens at the community level can influence a newcomer's decision to stay or leave. There is a need for a 'welcoming communities' strategy.
- The issue of foreign credential recognition needs to be addressed.
- Increased access to English as a Second Language programs, especially language related to the work place, is required.

6. NEED FOR REALISTIC GOALS AND ADEQUATE RESOURCES.

- Annual attraction targets must be realistic and linked to the province's capacity to settle and integrate them successfully.
- The Province needs to ensure a successful immigration strategy by allocating sufficient resources for appropriate programs and initiatives.

It was recommended by the women stakeholders that the Province apply a gender lens in the development of its immigration policy to ensure issues such as the role women play in other societies, the fact that women are the majority of the victims of violence and the isolation most often experienced by women immigrants entering the country as a spouse, are addressed.

The following section will outline the questions asked of participants and the responses heard throughout the process.

Following are some potential priority areas of a provincial immigration strategy. Please indicate which ones should be included.

1. Increase the number of immigrant entrepreneurs who will start business enterprises in the province.
2. Increase the number of skilled workers, focusing on those skills not available in the province.
3. Increase the number of international students studying in the province.
4. Increase the number of immigrants under the family reunification category to help increase the retention rates of those already here.
5. Increase the number of government-assisted refugees destined to the Province.

There was general consensus that these were the appropriate priority areas for the strategy, with particular support for the attraction of the first three categories of immigrants. There was strong support for the attraction of more entrepreneurs who would start businesses and create employment opportunities for local residents. There was also support for increasing the number of immigrants who possess skills not available in the province, as well as international students who might be invited to remain in the province upon graduation.

During discussion of this question, a number of themes and suggestions emerged as follows:

- The strategy should be a broader population strategy, of which increased immigration would be a key component.
- The focus should not be just on numbers, but on attracting the right individuals who will make a contribution to the province and settle in the areas that need them most.
- Communities need to "buy-in" to ensure successful integration of newcomers.
- Financial resources will be necessary for a strategy to be successful.
- Research needs to be conducted to determine why people do or do not stay, and build on successes.
- 'Red tape' needs to be reduced, particularly within the federal government.
- Settlement services need to be available outside St. John's.
- Awareness of the contribution made by immigrants should be increased.
- The strategy must include all areas of the province.
- A retention strategy should be developed including the necessary supports.
- Improvements must be made on the issue of foreign credential recognition.
- Promotion and attraction efforts should focus on immigrants willing to settle in Newfoundland and Labrador, those who are young and who are likely to have children, and families vs. individuals.
- The province could be promoted as a desirable retirement destination.
- Broader thinking is required to include the humanitarian aspect of immigration - not just on what they can do for us.
- The Province should lobby the federal government to change the selection criteria to give more points for individuals who have trades training.
- The process by which international students become immigrants should be streamlined.
- A manual for immigrants to help understand about Canada/about services provided/ how to get credentials assessed, etc., should be developed.
- While Newfoundland and Labrador currently accepts approximately 155 government-assisted refugees annually, it has the infrastructure and

capacity to settle and integrate more. It was suggested that there be a gradual increase to 200 - 250 annually, with a focus on expanding settlement services to rural communities.

How can increased immigration contribute to the social, cultural and economic growth of rural areas?

There was general consensus that increased immigration would make a significant contribution to the growth of rural areas of the province. Some of the ideas discussed are as follows:

- More children in a community would have a positive impact on the education system by helping to keep teachers, retain infrastructure, and make recreation facilities viable, and exposing children to other cultures may serve to decrease racism.
- More immigrants would help create new businesses, increase employment opportunities, increase the tax base, and help tap into global markets.
- An increase in population through immigration would increase federal transfer payments which are allocated on per capita basis and add to the pool of volunteers in communities.
- Increased immigration would help to expose us to new cultures, new cuisine, music, art and languages, encourage diversity, give a more international perspective, and create a more dynamic provincial culture.
- Increased immigration would help to stabilize the population, bring new ideas, and new technologies and generally make communities more vibrant.
- Immigrants are generally determined to succeed and can open our own eyes to the potential that exists in the province.

How can increased immigration help to address labour market shortages in Newfoundland and Labrador?

There was general consensus among stakeholders that increased immigration would help to address labour shortages in the province, but that the role for immigration in doing so is not widely recognized by members of the public.

Some expressed the opinion that an immigration strategy should not be about replacing Newfoundlanders, but must create employment where possible. A key point expressed in most discussions was the need to know where the skills gaps

exist. Also, there needs to be collaboration with Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic to ensure there is a match of curriculum to skill needs that are forecasted for the long-term.

It was noted that a fundamental obstacle to growth in the province is a small population base and a current labour pool best suited for exploitation of natural resources (i.e. logging, mining, and the fishery). It was further suggested that an increase in the immigrant population would not only increase the population but enhance the competencies of the general labour market.

Other themes and suggestions that emerged on this topic include:

- We need to look at anticipated future shortages and short-term issues, recognizing that the occupations in which shortages occur vary over time.
- The Immigration Strategy should complement a provincial labour market strategy.
- We should attract/retain people with specialized skills not available in the province.
- A local worker should be apprenticed under each skilled immigrant worker to ensure transfer of skills to the local labour supply.
- There is a need for buy-in/awareness of local population of the value of workplace diversity.
- There is a need to recognize the education/experience of immigrants.
- We need to determine if there is a "bias" in the system against hiring immigrants.
- We should make a concentrated effort to help immigrants who have already found work to stay in the province.
- We need to focus on growing the labour market supply rather than just filling skills gaps.
- Lack of adequate English as a Second Language training is a barrier to obtaining employment.
- Increased immigration can provide future workers for the province.
- Increased immigration can help supply workers for unskilled positions, particularly in the service industries.

Newfoundland and Labrador currently attracts an average of 400 immigrants per year. In your opinion, what is a reasonable number?

Most participants were reluctant to suggest a specific number, but noted that it should be reasonable and linked to our capacity to provide appropriate

services and employment opportunities. Some suggested we should attract a sufficient number to offset the decline in our population, while others expressed the view that the Province should aim to attract its proportional share. In other words, since our population represents 1.6 percent of the Canadian population, we should try to attract 1.6 percent of immigrants to Canada on an annual basis. This would translate to approximately 3,700 annually. Others made suggestions of numbers which ranged from 800 to 10,000 annually, noting that it would take considerable time and effort, and financial resources, to reach those goals.

Several stakeholders suggested that Government look at the experiences of others such as the province of Manitoba and the country of Ireland with a view to adopting best practices from those areas.

What incentives, if any, could be offered to employers to hire immigrants?

There was no consensus on this question. One stakeholder suggested a one-year relief period of Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Employment Insurance (EI) premiums for employers who hire immigrants and free access to an interpreter should language skills be poor. The majority of stakeholders, however, did not feel that financial incentives were necessary since a skills shortage would be incentive enough for employers to hire an immigrant who possessed the needed skills. Also, many expressed the view that offering incentives would serve to alienate the local population against immigrants and impede their successful integration into society.

One incentive that was generally supported was the offering of cultural awareness and diversity training workshops to employers to assist them in gaining the knowledge required to provide a welcoming and accepting workplace to individuals from different cultures.

What incentives, if any, could be offered to immigrants to settle in Newfoundland and Labrador?

Again, opinions varied on this question and there was no clear consensus on whether it would be desirable to offer incentives to immigrants to settle in the province. While in some communities incentives are offered (e.g. municipal tax breaks, snow clearing of driveways), other communities were not supportive of that

approach, largely due to the fear of resentment being generated among local residents.

For those who suggested incentives, following are some of the ideas expressed:

- Provide English as a Second Language training for immigrants and their family members to help employability.
- Allow immediate access to social benefits (EI and CPP).
- Provide training/orientation and life skills needed for successful integration into community life.
- Help spouses to find suitable employment.
- Provide a social network - partnering with a local family for mentoring.
- Establish support centres to help with foreign credential recognition.
- Grant a tax exemption grace period for provincial taxes.
- Provide subsidies on rent for a period of time.
- Offer free land - a modern-day 'homesteading' program.
- Offer to bring in family members of immigrants.
- Provide settlement/integration supports in rural areas.
- Ensure that appropriate food is available in local supermarkets.

What could be done to encourage private sponsorships of refugees?

All participants agreed that the most important action necessary to encourage the private sponsorship of refugees is awareness building. Many stakeholders were not aware of the program and what would be involved in agreeing to sponsor a refugee family. Those participants who had experience with private sponsorship noted that while it can be challenging, the rewards are great.

How should the province promote itself to potential immigrants?

There was general recognition of the need to promote the province to potential immigrants as there is a general lack of awareness of what the province has to offer. It was also noted that different approaches would be necessary for different groups (entrepreneurs, skilled workers, students) and different countries. Some of the ideas presented are as follows:

- Provide relevant, accurate information to embassies and visa posts.

- Promote our quality of life, our culture, and safe, welcoming communities.
- Establish a system to respond to inquiries.
- Utilize educational institutions to attract international students.
- Enlist the support of the current immigrant population to promote the province in their countries of origin.
- Develop a provincial package of promotional information.
- Develop a good web page aimed at potential immigrants.
- Tap into increased desire for alternatives to Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver.
- Set up an ambassadors program to tap into Newfoundlanders and Labradorians all over the world to promote the province.
- Invest money to bring embassy personnel to the province on a pilot basis so that they can learn first-hand about what we have to offer.
- Promote success stories and utilize testimonials from past and current immigrants.
- Advertise in other countries, visit visa posts, participate in trade shows and set up promotional displays at immigration fairs.

What countries should the province target in attracting immigrants? Why?

Discussion on this question centred around the general principle that the Province should target those countries which have some similarities to Newfoundland and Labrador so that adaptation would be more easily realized. It was suggested that research needs to be conducted to determine which immigrants find it easy to adapt to life in Newfoundland and Labrador so that we can build on previous successes.

In addition to targeting countries which have the skill sets we need, there was general consensus that people from rural, coastal areas where the climate was somewhat comparable would likely settle more successfully in this province. Other themes included targeting countries from which we already have immigrants who have integrated into our society. Some of the specific ideas expressed are as follows:

- Target northern Europe and Russia where the climate is similar.
- Target countries which have high population densities and limited land availability to attract individuals seeking more open spaces.

- Target India because its residents are well educated, have an excellent work ethic and have skills focused on technology and fine craftsmanship.
- Target English-speaking countries such as Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the United States as we already have immigrants from those countries who have successfully settled in the province.
- Target Germany because residents are highly educated with strengths in engineering and heavy industry.
- Target coastal areas including South Africa, Mexico, and Western Europe.
- Target St. Pierre and Miquelon because of its location and historic connections to the province.

Currently, Statistics Canada reports that Newfoundland and Labrador retains only 36% of immigrants who originally settle here. What can the provincial government do to increase the retention of immigrants?

There was general consensus that Government needs to determine why immigrants leave the province and to implement measures to address the issues identified. One stakeholder noted that in her view there are three essential ingredients to successful integration and therefore retention. First, immigrants need to feel 'connected' and part of the community, secondly, they need to feel 'capable' (e.g. speak the language, be occupationally competent), and thirdly, they need to feel that they are making a 'contribution'.

There were many suggestions as to what the provincial government could do, as follows:

- Ensure that prospective immigrants have accurate information on the province so that they can make informed decisions about settling here.
- Engage immigrants to learn about their needs and what will entice them to stay.
- Ensure that employers are aware of the benefits of a diverse workplace so employment opportunities will be more readily available to immigrants.
- Ensure that communities are welcoming and support services are in place throughout the province.
- Lobby the federal government to expedite the processing of family reunification applications to help retention.
- Ensure social, cultural, and religious networks are in place, as well as family support services.

- Address education issues for children, particularly the availability of English as a Second Language training in the K-12 system.
- Ensure there is someone in each region to support municipalities and other groups in welcoming immigrants.
- Develop a multicultural policy and celebrate diversity.
- Ensure that all immigrants, including visible minorities, are represented at all levels of government.

What can communities do to increase retention of immigrants?

Stakeholders recognized that communities are key in ensuring the successful integration of immigrants in order to improve retention. In addition to policies and strategies at the provincial level, buy-in at the community level is essential in order to achieve a successful immigration strategy. Some of the specific suggestions are outlined below:

- Develop a 'welcoming community' strategy to ensure that immigrants are accepted.
- Introduce the 'welcome wagon' approach for newcomers.
- Ensure that there are programs available for children of immigrants.
- Meet new immigrants at the airport (if applicable) and have the community plan social events to introduce the newcomers to local residents.
- Be inclusive and invite newcomers into homes and share cultural experiences, food, music, etc.
- Celebrate diversity at the community level by hosting multicultural events.
- Tap into the existing immigrant community to create a welcoming environment.
- Develop an inventory of what community has to offer and prepare a resource booklet/orientation package for immigrants.
- Ensure that the local grocery store stocks specific foods which appeal to immigrants.

What is a reasonable retention rate for Newfoundland and Labrador?

- Less than 36%
- 37% to 50%
- 50% to 70%
- Higher (Please Specify) _____

All participants agreed that the retention rate should be increased, but there was no consensus as to what a reasonable rate would be. Some stakeholders expressed the view that the province should aim for 100 percent retention, while recognizing that it is probably not realistic. The most common range selected was 50% to 70% with a preference for 70% since it was seen to be achievable over time.

In addition to the multi-stakeholder sessions, there were three sessions held with specific stakeholder groups (business groups, women's organizations, educational institutions). At each of these sessions, a specific question was asked on the role each group could play in a successful provincial immigration strategy. The specific feedback is outlined below:

Session with Business Stakeholders:

What are some employment issues which need to be addressed in the development of a provincial immigration strategy?

- Foreign credential recognition processes need to be improved.
- There is a need to increase supports for language training for specific jobs.
- Programs to teach 'soft skills' are required.
- A program is required that ties a local apprentice with skilled immigrant. Such a program may be a selling point for an immigration strategy.
- There is a need to give more profile to existing success stories.
- Education and awareness are required on the benefits of hiring immigrants (diverse skill sets, creativity, innovation, access to global markets, etc.)

What role can the business community/employers play in a successful immigration strategy?

- Make an effort to employ skilled immigrants.
- Make immigrants part of your team and help to integrate them socially.
- Become more involved with the Association for New Canadians.
- Make sure Government has accurate information on the skills needed by employers.
- Be visibly supportive of the Province's Immigration Strategy.

Session with Women's Groups:

What are some women's issues which need to be addressed in the development of a provincial immigration strategy?

- Many immigrants, particularly spouses, have no access to transportation in order to avail of what services are available.
- Victims of abuse don't always know where to go to get help.
- Immigrants don't always know how to get into the labour market as they have no references and may need help with resumes, etc.
- Child care/support is not always available.
- We need to be aware of the practices/norms of different cultures.
- Education for girls and women is needed (literacy is sometimes an issue).
- More resources are needed for programs for immigrant women.
- Education is required on the role of women in other societies—service groups need to be more sensitive.
- Ghettos are being created in some areas of St. John's, and we need to move towards greater community integration.
- Women are often the most isolated (men integrate through work - children through school).
- We need to have mandatory programs for women including a targeted/orientation session and a place to talk openly.
- Government needs to put a gender lens on the provincial immigration strategy.
- The strategy must be customized in recognition that we have small numbers of immigrating women from many countries.

What role can women's groups play in a successful immigration strategy?

- Educate members of women's groups to recognize the issues of women from all cultures.
- Ensure that the voices of diverse women are represented by appointing people from other cultures to community groups.
- Implement a strategy to link all women's groups, including multicultural groups to increase coordination and information.

- Reconcile feminist principles with cultural differences.

Education Stakeholder Session:

What are some education issues which need to be addressed in the development of a provincial immigration strategy?

At the session of education stakeholders, there was much discussion of the potential for educational institutions to play a key role in the Province's immigration strategy. While a few participants noted the need to treat international students with more respect by providing them with medical coverage and not charging them differential tuition fees, this view was not generally supported by the group. It was noted that tuition fees at Memorial University are the lowest (with the exception of those in Quebec) in the country and are an attractor for international students. Other issues identified are as follows:

- Differences in credential assessment by different institutions; need for greater consistency in licensing/certification requirements.
- A lack of awareness of the quality of education programs at Newfoundland and Labrador institutions.
- Visa officers appear to not understand the value of a post-graduate college diploma.
- A need to ensure the current international student body is satisfied and will be able to recruit others.
- A need for substantial financial resources to move the strategy forward.
- A need for more cultural diversity awareness throughout the Education system.
- A need for more on-campus housing for international students.

What role can educational institutions play in a successful immigration strategy?

At the session with education stakeholders, and in the submission from Memorial University, a number of suggestions were made as follows:

- Increase the number of international students studying in the province.

- Offer training for faculty who travel the world for research/lectures to promote immigration to Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Ensure awareness of the Provincial Nominee Program.
- Encourage enrolment in distance education programs while waiting for visa processing.
- Tap into MUN alumni (55,000 world-wide) as ambassadors for the province.
- Increase awareness among faculty and staff of the benefits of increased immigration.
- Provide scholarships for international students to study in the province and provide supports to help them fit in.
- Identify gaps in community services/supports for immigrants and ensure adequate supports for children of immigrants/international students.
- Offer business supports for the start-up of new businesses
- Ensure accommodations are made for students with different religious backgrounds.
- Accept the transfer of credits from other countries.
- Target international high school students in other parts of Canada to enroll in the province's post-secondary institutions.
- Utilize the current international student body to help promote the province and its educational institutions to other potential students and prospective immigrants.
- Hold a provincial symposium to bring together all key parties involved in addressing immigration issues.
- Increase research initiatives to ascertain the reasons international students are coming to Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Consider opening an education office in an international market place identified among key partners as being of benefit to the province.
- Work with provincial governments within the Atlantic region to develop a stronger presence for Atlantic Canadian universities overseas.
- Increase financial assistance to the university to increase on-campus housing accommodation for international students.
- Provide an incentive for students to study at Memorial by providing a portion or all of the difference between international and domestic tuition fees.
- Make health coverage for international students the same as for Newfoundland and Labrador residents.
- Develop mechanism for international students and faculty to explore the province. Increase liaison with local international communities.
- Create promotional video, prepare information packages, and hold workshops for international students/faculty, orienting them to the province.

- Educate international students on jobs available, common workplace benefits, and how to obtain gainful employment.
- Provide subsidy to employers who hire international students for one year.
- Link students to companies who want to set up internationally (i.e. they may be interested in hiring students from that country).
- Collaborate on promotional activities such as advertising material and participation at international fairs.

Conclusion:

As outlined in the feedback from stakeholders, there is general support for the development of a provincial immigration strategy to contribute to the province's social, cultural and economic growth. Some participants indicated that it was 'long overdue' and one described it as visionary on the part of government.

In addition to the key messages from stakeholder sessions a number of direct recommendations/suggestions were also provided in written response to the discussion paper. Many were from the immigrant community and they highlighted their personal experiences.

It was noted by some that in order for the Province to implement a successful immigration strategy, attitudes will need to change to ensure that immigrants are welcomed in our communities and their valuable contributions to society are recognized.

The majority of stakeholders agreed that there is a lack of awareness throughout the province with respect to immigration, including potential benefits and issues related to successful settlement and integration of newcomers and the difference between an immigrant, a refugee and a refugee claimant.

While supportive of increased immigration, many participants expressed concern about the out-migration of 'our own' youth and the desire of many expatriate Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who want to return home. Many expressed a preference for a larger 'population strategy' which would encompass initiatives in all three areas.

Stakeholders expressed the view that targets for attraction and retention must be realistic and linked to our capacity to provide appropriate services. There was no agreement on an appropriate target number for attraction.

There was general agreement that our retention rate of immigrants must be improved and should be 70 percent or higher.

There was general consensus that municipalities are key partners in ensuring a successful and viable immigration strategy for the province. In this regard, stakeholders showed keen interest in the recent publication of "Attraction and Retaining Immigrants: A Tool Box of Ideas for Smaller Centres". It was launched on November 21, 2005, and is available on-line at www.integration-net.cic.gc.ca/.

It was agreed that there should be programs designed to promote multiculturalism, anti-racism and cultural sensitivity for the public, K-12 students, post-secondary students, and businesses.

Finally, there was general agreement that the Province's immigration strategy should be flexible, inclusive, and long-term, preferably over a 5 to 10-year period, with periodic assessment to measure success.

Note: The discussion document "An Immigration Strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador: Opportunity for Growth" has been translated into French and will be available on-line by mid-December. In January there will be a consultation session with francophone community representatives to seek their input into the provincial immigration strategy.