

**LOCAL PERSPECTIVES ON IMMIGRATION AND DIVERSITY IN  
15 ONTARIO MUNICIPALITIES**

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Immigration and the growth in the size of the visible minority population are making significant changes to the face of Canada beyond the largest immigrant-receiving metropolises of Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. Nowhere will these changes become more apparent than in Ontario, where mid-sized cities have already experienced significant growth in the cultural diversity of their populations (Federation of Canadian Municipalities 2009).

Since 2001, successive federal governments have promoted the regionalization of immigration, which would see more newcomers landing and staying in second and third tier immigration cities (Frideres 2006; Abu-Ayyash and Brochu 2006). The impetus for regionalization stemmed from concerns that the concentration of immigrants in the largest census metropolitan areas had adversely affected the size and demographic profile of smaller provinces and their communities, as well as their prospects for economic development and political power. Regionalization was seen as a vehicle for economic growth, a more regionally balanced population, and greater uniformity in the demographic profile of smaller and larger provinces and their respective local communities (Garcea 2003). Over the past decade, second tier immigration cities such as Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Hamilton and Ottawa, and third tier municipalities with populations of approximately 100,000 or less, have devoted increasing attention to attracting and retaining newcomers (Krahn, Derwing and Abu-Laban 2003).

The convergence of federal and local interest in the regionalization of immigration has been accompanied by the devolution of responsibility for the reception, settlement and integration of new arrivals. Since the early 1990s, greater provincial involvement has been formalized in intergovernmental agreements between the federal government and all ten provinces and the Yukon (Biles, Burstein and Frideres 2008). A growing number of municipal governments and local stakeholders have also become more active political agents in developing immigrant settlement policy at the local level (Poirier 2004). The 2005 Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA) was the first federal-provincial agreement to include a provision to involve municipalities in planning and discussions on immigrant settlement. Through COIA, funding has been provided for the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) initiative, a multi-level collaborative governance arrangement that has spurred the interest of municipalities and neighbourhood associations across the province in developing strategic plans to build inclusive and responsive environments for newcomers (Burr 2011).

The regionalization policy, the LIPs initiative, and changes in immigration flows that are seeing more Ontario-bound immigrants settling in second and third-tier municipalities outside the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), speak to the importance of understanding whether and why local governments in these communities are interested in immigration, how demographic change is viewed by area residents, and whether these municipalities have the capacity to meet changing service needs. Existing studies of interest, receptivity and capacity in the province's small and mid-sized urban centres have been dominated by comparative analyses of communities in the GTA. The urban public policy literature has tracked the growing involvement of some municipalities

outside the GTA in the attraction and retention of newcomers (Frideres 2006; Biles 2008; Tolley, forthcoming), but it has lagged in geographic coverage. Early studies on the capacity of suburban communities in the GTA to provide appropriate forms of settlement and integration assistance suggested they faced formidable challenges (Frissen and Wallace 2003). Much less is known about capacity and receptivity to immigration in municipalities outside the GTA

This paper will broaden the scope of analysis to 15 second and third-tier municipalities situated outside the GTA and across the province. Through a series of 10 confidential interviews with opinion leaders from the governmental and non-governmental sectors in *each* community, the interview agenda addresses four lines of inquiry. First, it explores perceptions about whether and why their respective local and/or regional governments are interested in immigration. It also probes their views on whether community leaders in general see immigration as contributing to the identity, economic, social/cultural, and political/civic life of the community, as well as their personal assessments of the advantages and disadvantages of immigration. Second, it discusses their perceptions of whether the broader local public is interested in more immigration, and whether their communities are welcoming places for newcomers and visible minorities. A third theme captures opinions about the municipality's capacity to meet changing program and service needs, and the required steps for improving the warmth of welcome for newcomers. Finally, demographic data on the age, gender, length of community residency, immigrant status, and ethnic and racial origins of the interviewees have been collected in order to paint a profile of community leadership. Overall, the study furnishes important insights about interest in, and receptivity to, immigration and diversity in less well-studied urban centres, as well as policy recommendations that support the development of welcoming communities. The following section reviews the literature related to these lines of inquiry.

#### *Drivers of local government interest in immigration*

The desire to stimulate economic competitiveness and labour market development has driven local interest in immigrant attraction and retention initiatives in London (London Economic Development Corporation 2005), Ottawa (Stasiulis, Hughes and Amery forthcoming), Windsor (Munro 2006), the Region of Waterloo (Abu-Ayyash and Brochu 2006), Greater Sudbury (Walton-Roberts 2007), and St. Catharines-Niagara (Tossutti and Morettin 2011). Greater Sudbury and the Regional Municipality of Niagara have also identified immigration as a means to counter aging populations and youth out-migration. In Greater Sudbury and London, immigration has been linked to a broader economic and *cultural* development strategy based on economist Richard Florida's creative class thesis (Block 2006; Brochu and Abu-Ayyash 2006). According to Florida, members of the creative class include skilled workers who create new ideas, technology and creative content, as well as creative professionals in the fields of business, law, finance, health care etc. In the "Rise of the Creative Class", he argues that members of the creative class prefer to locate to environments with technological infrastructure, high-quality arts and recreational amenities, high levels of acceptance of gays, immigrants and "bohemians"

(professional artists, writers and performers) and low levels of racial segregation. Since businesses move to locations with the greatest supply of skilled labour, the fostering of a welcoming community for immigrants and cultural minorities is part of a holistic strategy to attract business investment and creative class workers (2004).

### *Immigration and diversity: national and local opinion*

Compared to people in most other immigrant-receiving countries, Canadians are more likely to believe that immigrants have a good influence on the country (German Marshall Fund 2011; Gross 2004), are less likely to call for reductions in immigration levels, and are more likely to agree that immigrants improve society by introducing new ideas and cultures (Jedwab 2008). An analysis of Canadians' attitudes about immigration between 1975 and 2005 found that a majority wanted immigration levels to remain the same (Wilkes, Guppy and Farris 2007). However, studies have also shown that public opinion shifts when survey questions are preceded by figures. When actual immigration levels are cited, Canadians are more likely to change their answer to "too many" immigrants are coming to the country. With respect to attitudes about cultural diversity, national surveys reveal that not all cultures are valued equally. A 1991 survey of 2,500 Canadian respondents about their "comfort level" with people of different ethnocultural backgrounds found that visible minority groups were less well-regarded than European groups (Berry and Kalin 1995; Kalin 1996). "Comfort levels" were highest for those groups perceived to be integrated into mainstream culture (Simon and Lynch 1999).

There are only a limited number of mass public opinion surveys about immigration in mid-sized and small Ontario communities. A survey of more than 1200 individuals commissioned by the City of Kitchener showed that nearly 70 percent disagreed with the statement that there was too much immigration. When items were targeted toward immigrants and their acculturation, a majority (55 percent) agreed that immigrants should assimilate into Canadian culture and 67 percent felt that the city should provide a common set of services rather than customize programs for different groups and cultures (Abu-Ayyash and Brochu 2006). In Greater Sudbury, a report on attitudes about race relations found significant levels of resentment and discrimination towards visible minorities, Aboriginals and the Francophone population (Block 2006).

### *Attitudinal drivers*

A significant body of research has examined the impact of objective economic conditions, subjective perceptions about the economy, group competition, or personal economic status, as well as occupational characteristics, on attitudes about immigration. Some Canadian scholars have noted that support for immigration is highly correlated with economic events, and that it plummeted during the recessions of the early 1980s and early 1990s (Hiebert 2003; Palmer 1996). In years when there were sharp, relative economic declines from the previous year, Canadians were more likely to prefer

restricting immigration (Wilkes, Guppy and Farris 2007). Others have demonstrated that **perceptions** of economic competition, whether based on real economic conditions or merely perceptions of group competition, play a primary role (Esses, Hodson and Dovidio 2003). A related line of inquiry argues that subjective evaluations of one's personal economic status are more important than objective status (Chandler and Tsai 2001). Economic competition models predicting that occupational characteristics influence attitudes about immigration have produced mixed evidence. According to these models, the presence of immigrants is believed to threaten and displace native-born workers due to the willingness of the former to work for lower wages. Consequently, the most vulnerable groups of native-born workers are expected to express the greatest aversion to immigration. Some studies have found that less skilled workers express the strongest aversion to immigration (Scheve and Slaughter 2001; O'Rourke and Sinnott 2004), but that the unemployed and the economically inactive are less averse because they have nothing further to lose by immigration (Gang et al. 2002).

Support for immigration in Canada also varies between social groups. In general, men, youths, and individuals with a post-secondary education are more likely to accept existing immigration levels, while women, older individuals, and those with less education preferred reduced levels. Economic competition models have been used to account for the lower support expressed by women and the less educated (Palmer 1996; Mahtani and Mountz 2002). Canadians who reported a non-Official Language mother tongue were also more likely to prefer increased immigration (Wilkes, Guppy and Farris).

Hiebert has detected puzzling differences in Canadian public opinion about immigration between the provincial and metropolitan scales. While more negative attitudes exist in provinces with high rates of immigrant settlement, the same is not true at the metropolitan scale in these same provinces (2003). He suggests this paradox might be explained by the more "immigrant friendly" views provided by immigrants in these same metropolitan areas. This urban/non-urban dichotomy thesis was supported by a study showing that residents of Vancouver and Victoria were more positively predisposed to immigration than British Columbians living in smaller cities and non-urban areas (Mahtani and Mountz 2002). The idea that residents in larger urban centres may be more open to immigration has been supported by a national study showing that residents in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver reported the highest levels of agreement with the proposition that immigrants have a positive impact (Environics 2000).

Hiebert's survey of public attitudes about immigration in Greater Vancouver in 2001-2002 found that participants were supportive of immigration as a whole, but less so about refugees (2003). Although respondents approved of immigration from nearly all areas of the world, a hierarchy of cultural preferences was evident. Just over 70 percent expressed positive sentiments about European immigrants, compared to 50-60 percent who were positive about immigration from other world regions. The exception to this openness was the Middle East, as only 45 percent provided a positive response to immigration from that region. Hiebert attributes these findings to cultural bias or to a short-term reaction to the events of 9/11. Attitudes were also shaped by differences in education and household income. In both cases, respondents with university degrees were

more comfortable with immigration and were more inclined to agree that Canada had a moral responsibility to admit refugees. Those with fewer educational credentials tended to feel that Canada was accepting too many immigrants and that they threatened the employment prospects of the native-born. These fears were associated with other concerns about disease and crime (2003).

The cultural and national origins of the respondents were less consistently associated with attitudes about immigration. Both European-origin and visible minority Canadians were equally supportive of immigration, though the former were more favourable to admitting refugees and to believe that Canada benefits from immigration. Few differences were noted in the attitudes expressed by immigrants and the Canadian-born. Some exceptions were that the Canadian-born were more likely to see admitting refugees as a moral responsibility and were more positive about immigrants from different world regions. The Canadian-born were also more likely to state that immigration rates were too high - a view linked to apprehensions that immigration places a strain on social services (2003).

#### *Perceived benefits and disadvantages of immigration*

Hiebert's survey also probed the respondents' perceptions about the benefits of immigration. Most referred to cultural diversity and the economic advantages (e.g. labour market development and consumer demand) flowing from immigration, while a smaller number believed that immigration was important for demographic reasons. Those who mentioned diversity believed that it was more than just a source of interesting restaurant choices - that it promoted tolerance and personal growth (2003). When asked to name the disadvantages of immigration, five types of statements were offered. First, about one-quarter of the Canadian-born believed that immigrants placed a strain on Canadian social programs. Second, 8 percent associated immigrants with high rates of crime or terrorism. About the same number criticized the management and priorities of the Canadian immigration system. Fourth, just over 100 respondents referred to refugees in negative terms, associating them with deceit and criminality. A few castigated the Canadian government for not admitting enough refugees. Finally, five percent of respondents felt that many immigrants were not attempting to adapt to the mainstream culture or dominant language (2003).

#### *Welcome and capacity of small and mid-sized centres*

The successful integration of immigrants depends on the willingness of local actors to provide a welcoming environment for newcomers. A welcoming community is the product of a collective effort to create a place where individuals feel valued and included. A sense of comfort, belonging, and mutual esteem among members of the established non-minority population and recent immigrants and minorities are essential ingredients for establishing successful, pluralistic communities (Dovidio, Gaertner and Esses 2008). A

welcoming community attracts and retains newcomers by: identifying and removing barriers; promoting a sense of belonging; meeting diverse individual needs and offering services that promote successful integration, with successful integration defined as the “ability to contribute, free of barriers, to every dimension of Canadian life – economic, social, cultural and political” (Esses, Hamilton, Abu-Ayyash and Burstein 2010).

Given the relatively recent arrival of immigrants and minorities in many second and third tier Ontario cities, and the consequent lack of experience with diversity among the more established members of these communities, ensuring that such conditions are met can pose substantial challenges (Kunz and Sykes 2007). While larger immigration destinations have multiple service organizations, other regions suffer from a shortage of services or the absence of such organizations. Several reports on the challenges facing newcomers in the Waterloo Region have identified low incomes, underemployment, and the inability of qualified newcomers to fill vacant positions in the technology industry or immigrant physicians to find work, as issues. Immigrant youths also identified challenges stemming from having to reconcile contrasting cultures in the school and family spheres, language struggles, peer pressure and discrimination. Reports have also identified the need for additional refugee services, as immigrants in this category are more susceptible to poverty and health problems (Abu-Ayyash and Brochu).

The barriers inhibiting the integration and settlement of immigrants in London are familiar in both large and smaller centres across Canada. Many recent immigrants face unemployment or underemployment. London is also facing a severe shortage of health care providers and lacks health and mental health support services for refugees who have experienced trauma and torture. Many newcomers are on waiting lists for ESL training or are unable to access language training because of issues related to traveling distance and child care. Many landlords will not rent to immigrants and many service providers will not provide services to immigrants, simply because of their status. As in Waterloo, the city has developed strategies and plans to address employment barriers, but other problems regarding health services, affordable housing, language and discrimination have until recently received less attention (Brochu and Abu-Ayyash 2006).

Greater Sudbury’s municipal government and non-governmental organizations have been working to recruit francophone immigrants, expand employment opportunities, stimulate diversity through arts and culture, nurture youth attachments to the community and facilitate cross-cultural awareness and interaction among children. Although a range of programs have been underway, Block identified a need for more services specifically designed for immigrants, in the areas of housing, health and the promotion of civic engagement (2006). In Ottawa, members of non-governmental organizations felt that the city had provided little leadership in immigrant settlement initiatives. A 2007 analysis of immigrant labour market integration found that those who landed between 1996 and 2001 experienced lower average incomes and higher unemployment rates than the Canadian-born. Programs and services that were limited or not targeted towards immigrants and employers were also mentioned as issues (City of Ottawa Economic Development and Strategic Projects Branch and the Employment and Financial Assistance Branch 2007).

### *Immigrants and visible minorities in the governmental and non-governmental sectors*

Studies of visible minority representation on local councils in Toronto (Siemiatycki 2009), Ottawa (Biles and Tolley 2009) and Hamilton (Bird 2009) have found that visible minorities have not achieved proportional representation in the province's largest immigrant-receiving cities. An email survey of candidates in the 2010 local elections in Ontario's 23 largest cities found that visible minorities and immigrants were all strongly underrepresented in municipal politics. Following the elections, just 19 percent of council seats (including the office of mayor) were held by immigrants and less than eight percent of council seats were held by visible minorities, despite the fact that immigrants comprised 36.9 percent and visible minorities 32 percent of the general populations in these cities (Bird 2011). Bird points to the lower candidacy rates of these groups as a partial explanation for these trends. However, the lower success rates of visible minority candidates suggest they may also face additional obstacles once they become candidates. Since the survey includes Toronto and other GTA communities, it is unclear whether immigrants and visible minorities are underrepresented in municipal politics in this study's fifteen communities.

There are no corresponding studies of visible minority or immigrant representation in the non-governmental sector of Ontario's municipalities. However, national studies show a lack of inclusiveness in the senior ranks of public, private and non-profit organizations. In 2006, although visible minorities comprised 16.2 percent of the population, they held only 5.2 percent of senior management positions in large companies and 1.6 percent of executive management positions in the federal public sector. Comparable figures for the non-profit sector are scarce, but a 2005 study in Alberta found that just five percent of the senior management of non-profit organizations were comprised of visible minorities in a province where they made up 11 percent of the population (Conference Board of Canada 2008).

### **Research Method and Study Design**

This study relies on structured, focused comparisons of fifteen cases in order to explore interest, receptivity and capacity in Ontario's second and third tier centres. The study is structured since the same interview questions were posed to the respondents in order to standardize data collection, and it is focused on four thematic lines of inquiry and not on all aspects of each municipality. The selection of a larger number of cases allowed for a more "orderly and cumulative" development of knowledge about the research questions (George and Bennett 2004). Fifteen municipalities were selected on the basis of their status as second and third-tier immigration centres outside the Greater Toronto Area. They included: Barrie, Brantford, Durham Region, Guelph, Hamilton, Kingston, London, North Bay, Ottawa, Peterborough, St. Catharines-Niagara, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Waterloo, and Windsor. These municipalities also host universities belonging to the



Welcoming Communities Initiative (WCI) network of academic and community-based researchers.

A mixed qualitative-quantitative methods approach was adopted in order to investigate the research questions. The quantitative dimension of this study is based on a statistical analysis of the interview data, where the number and proportion of responses to the interview questions are compared across communities. The results of the quantitative analysis are presented in Tables 1 through 11 (Appendix A). The qualitative research strategy involved the administration of ten confidential, semi-structured interviews with opinion leaders from the governmental and non-governmental sectors in each municipality, for a total of 150 interviews. The semi-standardized interview features predetermined questions that are asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but the interviewer has the freedom to probe beyond the answers. This flexibility allows interviewers to ask structured questions, permitting comparisons across interviews, and to pursue areas spontaneously mentioned by the interviewee. This approach has the advantage of producing a more textured set of accounts from participants (Berg 2009). The interview agenda tapped into opinion leader perceptions of local and regional (if applicable) government interest in immigration; the perceived contributions of immigration to various dimensions of community life, as well as its advantages and disadvantages; perceptions of broader community interest in immigration and whether the community welcomes newcomers and visible minorities; evaluations of the community's capacity to service newcomers and refugees; recommendations to improve the community's welcome to immigrants and help them find meaningful work; and demographic data. A copy of the discussion agenda follows the list of references.

A purposive sampling selection method was used to select five interview candidates from the governmental sector and five interview candidates from the non-governmental sector in each of the municipalities. The sampling universe in each municipality was comprised of leading members of key local governmental and non-governmental organizations, who occupy a position of authority and who are in a position to influence decisions and public opinion in their respective communities. Within the government sector, lists of key officials from the municipal and regional (if applicable) governments, local government agencies, police, school boards and broader public sector organizations were prepared. These included all elected municipal and regional councillors, including mayors; senior staff in the municipal administration; the heads of local economic development agencies; the chief of police; the head of the public library board; the directors of English and French-language school boards in the public and Catholic systems; presidents of anglophone and francophone colleges and universities situated in the community; hospital presidents; and/or the heads of local public health boards. Within the non-governmental sector, the lists of key officials included: the presidents of local chambers of commerce and district labour councils; the chief executive officers or owners of major area employers; the editors of daily and weekly newspapers and/or television stations; the executive directors of community service organizations, charitable organizations, and community foundations, excluding immigrant service providers and ethnic and multicultural associations who have a direct interest in the outcome of the study. The data sources for these lists included

organizational websites, the community information database, follow-up phone calls for information not in the public domain, and informed guides affiliated with the WCI.

After these lists were prepared, the principal investigators sent pre-contact letters by electronic mail to a random sample of 12 individuals from each sector, inviting them to participate in the study. The names of respondents who agreed to participate in the study were forwarded to Dr. Donna Dasko, Senior Vice-President of Environics Research Canada, a respected national polling firm. In some municipalities it was necessary to issue a second round of invitations to the remaining candidates on the list in order to achieve the target sample size. Candidates who had expressed an interest in participating in the study were then randomly selected by Dr. Dasko for an interview. Their identities were never revealed to the principal investigators in order to mitigate the potential for selection bias and to preserve confidentiality. Since an upper limit of ten was placed on the number of interviews that could be conducted in each community, response rates cannot be calculated in a meaningful way as there were more willing respondents than interviews to be granted in some municipalities. While the financial resources allotted to this project and short one-year timeline limited the total sample size to 150, the principal investigators are confident that their responses reflect informed and candid insights about their cities and towns, given the interviewees' deep involvement in community life and their long average period of residency.

The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by Environics personnel, and then submitted to a team of research assistants from the University of Western Ontario and Brock University for qualitative and quantitative content analysis. For the qualitative analysis, an open, manifest coding process (Berg) was used to identify the thematic categories and tone (positive or negative) of the responses to the questions about government interest, the perceived contributions of immigration, personal evaluations of immigration, and perceptions of community receptivity and capacity. The coding categories distinguished between historical, economic, social/cultural, political/civic (e.g. political and civic leadership), civic resources/infrastructure (e.g. availability of settlement services, networks of community, ethnic or religious organizations, housing, transportation etc.), community attitudes/group relations, and "other" factors. The categories were modified for the questions where respondents were asked to provide recommendations on how the community could improve the welcome for immigrants (i.e. economic, social/cultural, political/civic, civic resources/infrastructure, community attitudes/group relations, educational), who should bear the onus for helping immigrants find meaningful work (i.e. government policies/programs, business sector/firm initiatives, NGOs, community member attitudes, other, no action necessary). Inter-rater reliability tests were conducted for the first two municipalities in order to ensure consistency in the qualitative coding of the interview questions. Agreement rates of 85-90 percent were obtained. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion so that subsequent coding was consistent across coders. A summary of the coding category frequencies is provided in Tables 12 thru 14 (Appendix B). The row counts can exceed or fall short of 150 for two reasons: first, some of the longer excerpts from the interviews touched on factors that addressed several coding categories. This meant that the response of one individual was sometimes partitioned into two responses in order to capture that complexity. A second

reason why the row counts may not total 150 reflects the fact that some questions were not answered by all respondents.

## **Analysis**

### *Assessments of Government Interest and Community Leader Perceptions of Immigration*

Our analysis confirmed high levels of municipal interest in the attraction and retention of immigrants. Slightly more than 71 percent of the respondents in the sample agreed in an unqualified fashion that their municipal governments were interested in immigration, while an additional 14 percent provided a qualified affirmative response (Table 1). Positive evaluations of the economic benefits that immigration could bring to the community were the most frequently-mentioned reasons for municipal interest, supporting the findings of previous studies (Table 12).

While overall levels of enthusiasm were high, perceived interest varied considerably across communities. Opinion leaders in Windsor and North Bay unanimously agreed that their respective municipalities were interested in immigration (Table 1). The Windsor interviewees attributed that interest to a belief that immigration could boost job creation in the small business sector, diversify the labour market, and stem population decline in the wake of job losses in the automotive sector (transcripts 1 thru 9). Similarly, in North Bay, opinion leaders linked municipal interest in immigration to perceptions that it could be a vehicle for investment and increased tax revenues for northern communities (transcript 2), as well as for labour market and demographic renewal. The interviewees elaborated on current challenges facing the community: a mismatch between employer requirements and the skills of available labour (transcript 1), labour shortages in the small business, mining and health care sectors (transcripts 3 thru 5, 7 and 9), an aging population and the migration of younger individuals to southern communities (transcripts 2, 3 thru 9).

In comparison, 30-40 percent of respondents in Barrie, Brantford and Thunder Bay did not feel that their municipalities were interested in immigration (Table 1). One respondent in Brantford described the city's economic development history as "very insular as well as economically challenged between the late 1960s and 2000," although he/she added that the municipal government had begun to see the advantage of a diversified population base and the need to establish a greater international presence (transcript 6). In Thunder Bay, some respondents could not identify specific initiatives aimed at attracting new immigrants. While they did not believe the municipality was adverse to immigration, and would be interested in it for the purposes of economic renewal or physician recruitment (transcripts 4, 7, 9 and 10), they felt that it was more focused on dealing with the needs of the city's growing Aboriginal youth population (transcripts 2, 3 and 6) and on coping with job losses in the forestry and grain industries (transcripts 3, 6 and 8).

Regional governments were perceived to be even more interested in immigration than lower tier governments. More than 86 percent of opinion leaders in the two-tier municipalities of Durham, Niagara and Waterloo believed their regional governments were interested in this issue (Table 2). Since upper tier governments are responsible for regional economic development, the dominance of the perceived economic benefits of immigration was not surprising (Table 12). In St. Catharines-Niagara, one respondent explained how the functions of lower and upper tier governments influenced the prominence of immigration on the local political agenda:

“...the municipal governments are more about retaining the manufacturing sector and looking at issues around hospitality and that kind of thing. So they’re in more of a maintenance mode and trying to stabilize the economy as opposed to actually boosting it. That’s more of a regional initiative” (transcript 7).

Several Niagara respondents said that regional authorities saw immigration as a source of broader skill sets, energy, knowledge or international connections (transcripts 5 and 8), and as a vehicle to counteract youth out-migration (transcript 6). One interviewee mentioned that the Region needed to adopt a low-key approach to promoting immigration so as not to offend area workers who have lost their jobs through plant closures (transcript 8). Interest in Durham Region was linked to the fact that its western constituent municipalities (e.g. Ajax, Pickering) were already receiving secondary migration from Toronto and needed to adapt existing newcomer services to facilitate their integration into the community (transcripts 1 and 9). The desire for economic diversification in the wake of a recession that hit the area’s manufacturing economy quite hard was also mentioned as a factor driving regional government interest (transcripts 4, 7 and 8).

Since opinion leaders were most likely to attribute government interest in immigration to positive economic outcomes (Table 12), it was not surprising that 84 percent of opinion leaders felt that community leaders in general would view immigration as contributing to the community’s economic life (Table 3). Just ten responses referred to the possible negative economic impact of immigration on the local economy. In thirteen of fifteen municipalities, between 70-100 percent of respondents felt that community leaders would see immigration as contributing to the area’s economic life (Table 3). In Waterloo Region, for example, the interviewees were unanimous on this point. They attributed these views to: the presence of Research in Motion and the University of Waterloo (transcript 1); labour shortages (transcripts 9 and 10); and the need to sustain population growth (transcript 5). In Barrie and Thunder Bay, only 50-60 percent of interviewees felt that community leaders would see immigration as having a positive impact on the economy. One Barrie respondent opined that immigration did not seem to be a priority for council (transcript 1), while another pointed to the underemployment of highly-skilled and educated immigrants as an example of an ineffective immigration process (transcript 9).

When asked whether they felt community leaders would see immigration as contributing to the city's social/cultural life, 87 percent of all respondents agreed (Table 4). While the potential social and cultural benefits of immigration are acknowledged in some municipal immigrant attraction and retention initiatives, they tend to be overshadowed by the economic case for immigration. Since community leader appraisals of the positive social and cultural benefits of immigration exceed the perceived economic benefits, municipalities seeking to win broader support for these initiatives might consider placing more emphasis on the former dimension. In London, for instance, interviewees referred to new consumer choices for restaurants and entertainment (transcripts 2 and 9), existing cultural festivals (transcript 8), new cultural sector jobs created by the Spanish-speaking community (transcript 10) and to cultural heterogeneity, as reasons why community leaders would see immigration as a contributor to the city's social and cultural life:

Another London respondent felt that acknowledgement of the social and cultural impact of immigration in London has been slow in coming:

“..to be very blunt and completely honest, London is not a very politically correct place. It's a very White Anglo- Saxon Protestant community and I don't think that we have recognized up until probably a few years ago, that in fact our citizens were changing and that we were getting more immigrants here.” (transcript 7).

Between 80-100 percent of respondents in each of fourteen municipalities felt that community leaders in general would agree that immigration had made a contribution to their city's social/cultural life (Table 4). In Barrie, just 60 percent of respondents felt the same way. The Barrie interviewees attributed these views to a lack of discussion about the potential benefits of immigration (transcript 4), to a lack of awareness (transcript 7) and to more pressing community priorities:

“It's not even on the radar. I've talked to many community leaders and workers that are just struggling to put food on food bank shelves, so to throw immigration in there and say “What's the value in that?” they can't even think about it because they're working so hard to do the other things” (transcript 2).

Opinions about immigration's contribution to the city's political/civic life or identity were not characterized by the same level of consensus as that witnessed for the items measuring the perceived economic or social/cultural contributions of immigration (Table 5). A plurality of opinion leaders (48 percent) did not feel that community leaders saw immigration as contributing to political/civic life, while a bare majority (53 percent) felt that it would be viewed as contributing to the community's overall identity. The results might be explained by the marketing of immigration as a vehicle for local economic development and demographic renewal, and to a lesser degree, cultural enrichment. Since municipalities do not emphasize how immigration might change local decision-making structures or the community's identity, it was not surprising that fewer people would see immigration as related to these outcomes.

Negative political-civic factors were mentioned in 50 responses to the question about whether immigration contributes to the community's political/civic life (Table 12). Examples of negative political-civic factors represent two different streams of thought: the first is centered on the idea that although community leaders valued the political and civic participation of newcomers and minorities, their small numerical presence in the community or in political and civic organizations meant that their impact had not been felt. The second view was that community leaders did not see the political and civic participation of newcomers and minorities as a priority. In Peterborough, the vast majority of opinion leaders pointed to a lack of cultural diversity in the community (transcripts 2, 3, 6, 7 and 9) as the main reason why immigration would not be seen as contributing to political/civic life. Another respondent opined that there was no strong push to have immigrants or visible minorities on council because they did not possess enough voting power to be of value for political leaders and organizations (transcript 4). Another interviewee attributed the lack of impetus to promote more diversity on council to attitudes rather than to demographic realities:

“...we have a very strong business leadership in our political representation currently and they were not promoting women or people of other cultures at all; they were very white male...probably all the typical ‘we’ve got the power and we’re going to keep it.’” (transcript 10)

Despite the relative pessimism about whether community leaders would see immigration as a contributor to the political/civic life of the city or town, a fair number (39) of responses were more optimistic (Table 12). For example, in Sudbury, where 70 percent of respondents felt community leaders would see these links, interviewees pointed out that immigrants “have taken a very strong civic stand in contributing to the community that has paved the way for municipal leaders to see value” (transcript 1), and referred to the participation of cultural groups in fundraising activities, city promotion, multicultural and ethnic associations (transcript 2), charitable, hospital and university boards (transcript 3) and as election candidates at all levels of government (transcripts 3 and 5).

As previously mentioned, a bare majority (53 percent) of all respondents agreed that community leaders would see immigration as contributing to the community identity. Respondents were more likely to cite positive attitudes and group relations as the reason for these views, rather than any possible economic or social/cultural benefits deriving from immigration (Table 6). There were notable inter-city differences in the extent to which immigration would be viewed as shaping the civic identity. While 80 percent of respondents in St. Catharines-Niagara, Durham Region, Hamilton and Guelph felt that it constituted a part of the community's identity, only a minority in Barrie, Kingston, Peterborough, North Bay and Thunder Bay felt the same way. In Hamilton, several respondents referred to positive community attitudes about multiculturalism and diversity

(transcript 10) or to pride in the city's historic role as a generous host for previous waves of immigrants (transcripts 5 and 8):

“...and if you ask anybody about Hamilton, there's two things everybody thinks that it's a steel town and it's dirty and all of that, but a lot of immigrants will know Hamilton because everybody they know either once was there or started off there or got help in some way in Hamilton.” (transcript 5)

In addition to these positive attitudes and historical connections with immigration, opinion leaders in Hamilton recognized the role of municipal initiatives in reinforcing the link between immigration, diversity and a broader civic identity:

“..it's typified by the concept of when we have the city of Hamilton and its leaders endorse the Pan-Am Games proposal – and we are a Pan-Am community – we are, I think, the only community who immediately said that there had to be a social inclusivity policy built into the games. And that's not just for the disabled; that's including all elements of the community...” (transcript 1).

In contrast, respondents in Kingston noted that the city's identity was grounded in its “largely White, Anglo Saxon and Protestant” demographic makeup (transcript 3). The city's historical heritage and older waves of European immigration were also mentioned as cornerstones of that civic identity (transcripts 1 and 9):

“Ironically, I'll say that heritage is such a big part of Kingston's self-image, but it's kind of hinged on the immigration of the 1830s. So, I would say we still come across as quite a British Isles background kind of place, and we have all these stone buildings built by Irish and Scottish stone masons that came here to build the Rideau Canal and it's still that kind of place...”(transcript 1)

When asked to offer their personal assessments of the advantages of immigration, Table 12 shows that the interviewees referred most often to positive social/cultural (n=67), positive economic (n=52) and positive community attitudes/group relations (n=38) factors. In Durham Region and Thunder Bay, where social/cultural factors were the modal response, opinion leaders referred to the collective benefits of increasing the “cosmopolitan mix” (Durham transcript 4), the infusion of new points of view and ideas (Thunder Bay transcripts 2,6, 7), cultural richness (Thunder Bay transcript 3) and lessons about racial harmony for the community's children (Thunder Bay transcripts 1 and 10).

Interviewees in North Bay and Ottawa were more likely than respondents elsewhere to mention positive economic factors as some of the advantages associated with immigration. In Ottawa, respondents referred to the talent and skills that immigrants could bring to communities with labour or skills shortages (transcripts 2, 3 and 6), to their contribution to demographic replacement (transcripts 4, 8 and 9) or to their international business experience (transcript 9). North Bay interviewees echoed sentiments about desirable immigrant skills sets, ideas and innovation in a community

that will need to fill positions vacated by retirees (transcripts 2, 3,4,6 and 8). Another respondent referred to immigration as an incentive that could convince companies to remain in the city (transcript 3), and to the benefits that immigrants could bring to individual companies:

“...they [area firms] can continue to operate and expand, just based on sheer number of people, but it [immigration] also helps them identify new potential markets. For example, if you have somebody in your labour force who has ties to somewhere you would like to expand into, it’s a heck of a lot easier to build those relationships. So that’s really good for our companies. It’s also good for our companies to bring in different ways of doing things as well; we may have the Canadian way we do things and the Canadian culture of work, but it brings in a different sense of how to make things happen, with technology and things like that.” (transcript 8)

Although theoretical expectations that economic insecurity would fuel negative assessments of immigration were observed in this study, negative economic factors did not top the interviewees’ assessments of the disadvantages associated with immigration. Instead, Table 12 reveals that perceptions about the community’s lack of civic resources and infrastructure to service newcomers and refugees were most common (n=41). Negative community attitudes/group relations (n=32) and perceptions about the potentially adverse economic impact of newcomers (n=30), were the second and third most frequently mentioned factors.

Six respondents in London referred to a lack of civic resources as a disadvantage for both vulnerable groups in the wider community and for the newcomer and refugee population. The following excerpt is representative of those sentiments:

“And immigrants, just by the fact that they’re newcomers, may need certain services more than other folks in our community. So it just puts more demand on social services and also might take away from other people in terms of availability of support workers, for example. So if we have somebody who’s lived in London for many years and now is, unfortunately, having to rely on Ontario Works and we have an increase in the immigrant population who are also relying on those services, then that person might not be able to get the services as quickly as they might need because there are more people who require the support.” (transcript 7)

A perceived lack of civic resources also emerged as a theme in Hamilton. Concerns were expressed about the need for more housing and settlement funding in order to respond to significant secondary migration from Toronto and Montreal, in addition to the challenges associated with integrating refugees with limited or no education (transcript 7). One respondent felt that an influx of refugees who depend on social assistance would lead to increased local tax rates (transcript 5), while another observed that many refugees become reliant on Ontario Works or other social programs after the year of federal funding expires (transcript 10).



An interviewee in Hamilton provided another example of how community leaders might view the negative economic consequences associated with an influx of less advantaged immigrants and refugees:

“There are people that would argue that Hamilton gets a disproportionate number of refugees that are socio-economically very, very poor and that that mix puts added burden and strain on the community. And I’ve heard people say that when people get off the plane at Pearson that if they have money they turn left and go down the Gardiner, and if they’re very, very poor, they go down the QEW to Hamilton. And some people actually view that it’s been a long-term strategy of both federal and provincial governments to put a disproportionate amount of low-income housing in Hamilton as a place to deposit underprivileged refugees and immigrants. So whether you believe that to be accurate or not, Hamilton does have an immigrant and refugee population...that is poorer than the comparable populations in Toronto. And it gets reflected in things like health status, which creates a greater health burden on the health system here...” (transcript 8)

*Perceptions of community interest and welcoming attitudes:*

In contrast to perceptions about strong levels of government interest in immigration and community leader appreciation of its economic and social/cultural contributions to community life, evaluations of the broader community’s interest in immigration are far less enthusiastic. Just 26 percent of all respondents felt that community members were interested in more immigration, while slightly more than 50 percent described community interest in immigration as mixed, and approximately 17 percent said community members were not interested in it at all (Table 7). Although no directly comparable question about “interest in more immigration” was posed in Hiebert’s survey of public attitudes in five areas of Greater Vancouver, where 35 percent felt that immigration levels were too high, the results of this study suggest there may be more public resistance to immigration in Ontario’s smaller centres. In general, the respondents did not perceive strong levels of public interest in any municipality; Greater Sudbury was the only municipality where a majority of respondents felt community members were interested in more immigration (Table 7). The lowest levels of interest were thought to exist in Brantford and Peterborough, where not a single respondent felt that the general public was interested.

An analysis of the 76 “mixed” responses suggests a few reasons for the perceived ambivalence in the broader community. In Peterborough, where eight “mixed” responses were given, one interviewee referred to fears that immigration threatens the job prospects of unemployed youths, and to incidences of racism in the community. However, those same observations were balanced by the view that the city had “done a good job of trying to nip it [racism] in the bud by holding open sessions to talk about racism, and that immigration is seen by some as a “blessing in disguise” that is making Peterborough more cosmopolitan (transcript 2). A few interviewees described local public opinion as falling into two broad camps - one dominated by residents who have lived in the community for generations, who are resistant to change or who view

immigration as an attack on resources, their views and culture - and a second, highly mobile group of recent residents who have moved to the city from GTA communities or other countries for work or education, and who expect to find cultural diversity (transcripts 5 and 6).

The 17 percent of respondents across all municipalities who did not perceive broader community interest in immigration were most likely to attribute this to negative attitudes (Table 13). In Brantford, for instance, one interview linked the absence of local community interest to the closure of area plants: “I don’t think it serves anybody very well to welcome new people into a city where there’s nearly 10 percent unemployment. So, you know, to bring in new Canadians could potentially set up resentment.” (transcript 3) Another Brantford respondent linked it to a lack of community support for change and to media representations of immigration as a concern or problem that “makes it into the kitchens and coffee shops...” (transcript 5)

The items probing opinion leader perceptions of the warmth of welcome for newcomers and visible minorities revealed similarly mixed views. Just 61.3 percent of all respondents felt that newcomers would be welcome in their community (Table 8). Positive community attitudes and the availability of civic resources were the first and second-most frequently cited reasons why they described their communities as welcoming. Respondents who felt their communities were less welcoming were more likely to point to negative community attitudes, rather than to a lack of civic resources or economic opportunities (Table 13).

Interviewees in Windsor, Guelph, Greater Sudbury, Ottawa and North Bay were most optimistic about the welcome for newcomers (80 percent or more), while the highest proportions of mixed responses were found in Peterborough (70 percent) and Hamilton (60 percent). In Windsor, respondents felt that the city’s proportionately large, diverse population, expansive network of cultural groups, community churches and municipal services, affordable housing, and friendliness, contributed to a welcoming community for newcomers (transcripts 2, 5, 6 and 10). In Guelph, most respondents pointed to the welcoming attitudes of residents, high-profile multicultural events, the University of Guelph’s role in diversifying the population mix, and city cultural initiatives that have attracted diverse members of the artistic community (transcripts 4, 6, 8 and 10). Some Guelph respondents were less optimistic about the welcome proffered to newcomers. One noted the relative absence of newcomers in major local institutions, save for the university and Linamar, an area auto parts manufacturer (transcript 9). Another referred to inter-group tensions between German and Mexican Mennonites, between Afghani and Caucasian children, and to opposition from the South and East Asian communities to a proposal from the area’s Muslim community to build a mosque (transcript 3).

The proportion of respondents who felt that their communities welcomed visible minorities dropped to just over 49 percent (Table 11), in keeping with Hiebert’s findings about a hierarchy of preferences for certain cultural groups. Those who felt that visible minorities would feel welcome pointed to positive community attitudes and group

relations as driving factors, whereas the opposite was true for those who felt visible minorities would not be well-received. In many communities, the presence of universities and/or a military base – public institutions which either employ diverse staffs or Canadians who have served abroad - were deemed to improve receptivity towards visible minorities.

While only a small minority of respondents opined that visible minorities would not feel welcome (12.7 percent), one third of respondents gave a “mixed” response (Table 11). These mixed responses reflected opinions that certain visible minorities would be less welcome than others, and that some demographic groups (younger, urban, educated) would be more receptive than others (older, rural, less educated). The following comment from a Kingston interviewee illustrates the nature of some mixed responses:

“Most people are welcome, but, you know, you have the rednecks that have their....you have that element, but we don’t have a large “Bubba” population here. We’re an academic community—60 percent of the population is in the public service in one form or another—so they don’t have those inbred prejudices bubbling under their shirtsleeves” (Kingston transcript 3)

As with the item dealing with the expected welcome for newcomers, there were substantial inter-community differences on the perceived welcome for visible minorities (Table 11). In both Ottawa and Windsor, 70-80 percent of respondents felt that visible minorities would be welcome. In St. Catharines-Niagara, North Bay and London, as many as three in ten opinion leaders felt that visible minorities would not feel welcome. The reasons for discomfort in these and other communities were almost exclusively linked to negative community attitudes (Table 13). The following excerpts from selected London and North Bay transcripts illustrate this point:

“...I just think that cities are products of their history and this is a city that until probably the last 50 years was quite isolated. It’s 200 km from Toronto and Detroit and it developed its own sense of itself that was quite Anglo-Saxon – and quite provincial. And a lot of that mindset sort of lingers on, in a covert kind of a way, but it does...so it’s not a community that I would really describe as open. I came here as the [deleted to preserve confidentiality] and that’s a job with a lot of community clout and even I felt like an outsider because I was not born here and I came from away. So I mean, if I felt that, I can’t imagine how someone who is of another colour and who doesn’t speak the language feels. I would imagine you would feel some cruelty about the reception you get.” (London transcript 5).

“My experience is that there are a lot of occasions where visible minorities stand out in a Euro-Canadian context that would make them feel centered out....It’s not an embracing climate...I think it’s just the tendency for people to identify with the familiar, i.e. ethnocentrism, and to see people who are different as a threat. In some cases, people view newcomers as not just different, but undermining, especially when they think of them as having religious or cultural practices as very different.” (North Bay transcript 5)

### *Capacity and solutions*

In contrast to previous studies suggesting that smaller and mid-sized generally cities lack the capacity to serve immigrants and refugees, apprehensions about a lack of capacity were generally restricted to Ontario’s smaller centres. Table 9 shows that more than 60 percent of all interviewees felt their community was in a position to meet the needs of immigrants, while fewer than half (48.7 percent) felt it could service refugees (Table 10). Those who felt the community was prepared were most likely to refer to the presence of civic resources and networks, while those who felt otherwise pointed to deficiencies on this same dimension (Table 14). Only a handful of respondents referred to negative economic factors (e.g. poor employment prospects in the community) as reasons why the community may lack capacity.

In London, Ottawa and Windsor, three of the four largest immigrant receiving cities in the study, between 80-100 percent of respondents felt their communities could serve newcomer needs (Table 9). In Ottawa, respondents discussed the availability of English language training, increased federal funding for accreditation ( transcript 4), and strong immigrant umbrella organizations and college training programs for foreign professionals (transcript 1), although concerns were expressed about the relative lack of language training resources for francophone newcomers (transcript 5) and for female homemakers and elderly parents (transcript 7). In London, respondents commented on the city’s immigration portal, strong network of community organizations and cooperation with businesses to develop welcome and mentorship programs for newcomers (transcripts 1, 4 and 10).

Pessimism about the capacity to serve newcomers was most pronounced in Hamilton and Kingston (Table 9). In Hamilton, one respondent noted how a lack of language and cultural supports can adversely affect the quality of emergency health care: “whether it’s people in the hospital or paramedics going to do CPR on a woman from a country who...is horrified that her blouse has to be taken off, and there’s nobody there to help the paramedic” (transcript 3). Other challenges that were identified during the interviews in Hamilton included the financial collapse of SISO, one of the city’s primary settlement services organizations (transcript 7), under resourced organizations that are striving to promote civic inclusion (transcript 10), the need for more accessible web-based information for immigrants (transcript 6), a lack of senior government support for housing for secondary migrants, and a lack of federal government awareness about what is happening in the city (transcript 10).

In London, Ottawa and Windsor, optimism about community capacity to service refugees was quite strong, although less so than for newcomers (Table 10). Between 60-70 percent of respondents in Durham Region, Waterloo, Hamilton and Kingston felt their communities could not deal with refugees. In Waterloo, concerns were expressed about deficiencies in support networks to help them find accommodations and enroll their children in school (transcripts 2 and 3) and about a relative lack of funding for secondary migration (transcript 8). In Durham, interviewees said the community would need more assistance from senior governments in order to receive a large group of refugees (interview transcript 1) or that existing language training, settlement services and school programs were inadequate (transcripts 3, 4 and 5). Durham's broader social services sector was also perceived to be under strain:

“..if you asked me ten years ago what was the population mix of people accessing our food bank, I would tell you it was all Caucasian and home-grown. But now, especially with the recent economic hard times, it's right across the board and so we're trying to pay more attention to the diversity, for example, in the food products that we carry [in the emergency food relief program] just to give people that they're familiar with and that they know how to use. We're also coming up more and more often that we're having issues with language and trying to understand people's circumstances to take care of them as well as we can.” (T-7)

The interviewees were asked to recommend what their communities could do to improve the welcome for newcomers and help them find meaningful work. Table 14 shows that the most common remedies to improve the welcome involve improvements to community resources/infrastructure (n=57) and political-civic initiatives (n=30). In St. Catharines-Niagara, one respondent suggested the region could build on the Peace Bridge Newcomers Centre or set up a new multi-service newcomer and refugee centre with a housing component and language and settlement support services (transcript 7). It was also felt that area political leaders had not placed enough emphasis on immigration as an important piece of the puzzle to improve Niagara's economic sustainability:

“...The problem is that Niagara just needs to find ways of getting new people to want to come here and settle here. And what we could do is make sure that the people who are in a position of influence are using the right language to get other people excited about the opportunity. Ultimately I think it's more of an ignorance issue as opposed to a conscious avoidance.” (Niagara transcript 10)

In Sudbury, there were calls for a coordinated, strategic direction from the municipal government or for more vocal expressions of support for diversity from some of the larger employers and city council (transcripts 1 and 6). On the resource side, one interviewee recommended locating a central office for newcomers in downtown Sudbury. The office would provide computer access and skills training, English or French as a Second Language classes, community information, and advice about rental housing and

real estate (transcript 2). Another suggested a more formal program offering subsidies or packages from different businesses, a new product for immigrants, or an inventory of rental landlords who would keep immigrants and refugees on a wait list (transcript 3).

Government policies and programs were cited most frequently (n=56) as the best vehicles for helping immigrants find meaningful work (Table 14). Respondents were less likely to place the onus of job creation on the business sector (n=36) or community members (n=22). In Guelph, a government sector representative referred to his/her employer's internship program and practice of ensuring that job postings featured more inclusive language that did not ask for degrees in a specific subject or ten years of experience. Instead, job candidates are asked to demonstrate knowledge in required areas of expertise, "normally acquired by a certain level of education or equivalent education and experience" (transcript 5). In Thunder Bay, a respondent suggested that major employers should engage in a broader and sustained dialogue about succession planning, that would extend to questions related to immigration and First Nations (transcript 10)

Several Waterloo respondents pointed to the utility of a multisectoral approach to immigrant job creation through the Waterloo Region Immigration and Employment Network, which engages government, non-profit organizations and businesses in the hiring and mentoring of new Canadians (transcripts 5, 8 and 10). The adoption of a multisectoral approach modeled on the Toronto Region Immigration and Economic Network, was also suggested in Durham Region (transcript 5). Another Durham respondent placed the onus on businesses to set the tone:

"I think a lot of it has to do with employers taking it on and saying 'this is going to be part of our business culture' and to set policies that embrace new populations into the workforce and then try and be able to meet some of the special needs and considerations that those new employees may have (interview transcript 7)."

Related to this point was the call for businesses to avoid dismissing foreign qualifications and credentials as this induces immigrants to:

"...accept jobs that are below their credentials simply because they know they have a family to look after and financial needs and everything else and I think as a community we do them a disservice simply by letting that happen...I think there's an opportunity for us to raise awareness through the Chamber of Commerce, business associations and medical professional associations". (transcript 8)

A community-oriented initiative in Guelph was identified as a successful model of integration that might be emulated in other venues. The neighbourhood-based model was initiated in an area with a large number of new Canadians, and involved the establishment of a community centre that helps immigrants learn about Canadian culture and find training and employment opportunities (transcript 10).

### *Demographic profile:*

Quantitative data were also gathered on the gender, age, residency, immigrant status, ethnic and racial ancestry characteristics of political, business and civic leaders in these communities. Opinion leaders were predominantly white (93 percent), male (62 percent), middle-aged (average age 52.4 years) and deeply embedded in their communities, having lived in them for an average of 29.6 years. Sixteen percent of the governmental and non-governmental organization leaders in this survey were born outside Canada - a level of representation nearly identical to the average 16.1 percent immigrant component of the 15 communities (Statistics Canada 2006a; Statistics Canada 2006b). Visible minorities, who comprise an average of nine percent of the populations in these municipalities, were slightly underrepresented in the sample of opinion leaders. Fewer than 7 percent (10 respondents) self-identified as members of racial minority groups and just 5 respondents did not identify their ethnic ancestry as Canadian, European or British Isles. This demographic profile confirms and builds on previous research about the underrepresentation of visible minorities in political, civic, business and non-profit organizations, on a national scale and in Canada's larger cities.

### **Conclusions and Policy Recommendations**

This study has shown that local governments in Ontario's smaller and mid-sized urban centres are widely perceived to hold a strong interest in immigration. Opinion leaders overwhelmingly believed that interest has been fuelled by local economic imperatives. Although these findings confirm the official rationale for more local involvement in immigrant attraction and retention initiatives, there is an equally strong appreciation for the potential social and cultural benefits of immigration, at least at the community leadership level. Immigration was less frequently regarded as something that has significantly altered the city's political/civic life or identity. The reasons for this pattern vary between communities, but it is telling that immigration was not perceived to have made an impact beyond the economic and social/cultural dimensions. These findings are reflected in the perceived low levels of visible minority representation in political and civic organizations, and in the study sample.

The opinion leaders are informed individuals who interact with people from all walks of life during the course of their daily lives, and as a result, are very familiar with how local publics would view immigration. They do not perceive that members of the broader public share the high levels of governmental and community leader interest in immigration. In general, community members are viewed as ambivalent or disinterested in it, rather than hostile. Nevertheless, a majority of respondents felt their communities were welcoming to newcomers and visible minorities, and that positive community attitudes or the availability of civic resources, rather than employment opportunities, played a large role in this. Some respondents noted the existence of negative attitudes about certain visible or religious minority groups, and some communities seemed to be more fraught with inter-group tensions than others. Concerns about the availability of sufficient resources to service immigrants, and refugees in particular, were prevalent in

most communities, and quite pronounced in some. Proposed solutions to improve the warmth of welcome and the ability of newcomers to find meaningful work tended to place the onus for crafting responses on governments first, and the business sector second. Their ideas usually involved requests for civic resources or more effective means of recognizing foreign credentials and experience, matching labour to needed skills, or providing job training and mentoring opportunities.

The study suggests some approaches that policymakers can adopt to improve the warmth of welcome for newcomers in Ontario's smaller and mid-sized centres. First, although many communities are experiencing economic or demographic challenges, perceptions of the role that immigration can play in addressing those needs varied across cities. This speaks to the importance of developing attraction and retention strategies that are sensitive to local context. Second, perceived governmental or public enthusiasm for immigration was lower, and concerns about possible deficiencies in civic resources higher, in communities that have experienced economic shocks and social strains. The size of the community was not as important a determinant of local receptivity to immigration as local economic conditions, the availability of civic resources, and the area's political culture, the latter of which appears to be strongly influenced by history and demography. All levels of government and community organizations should consider undertaking an education campaign that directly addresses the anxieties of local publics and demonstrates how immigration can serve their immediate and long-term material interests. Third, since the social/cultural benefits of immigration are, in general, widely appreciated, governments might emphasize this dimension to a greater degree when they attempt to engage community leaders and the broader population in this subject. Fourth, opinion leaders in some communities pointed to the need for senior governments to consider the impact of secondary migration in their funding regimes, as well as the special needs that are associated with large concentrations of refugees. Fifth, the dearth of visible minorities in community leadership positions was noted by several interviewees and reflected in the study sample. These patterns, in addition to perceptions that immigration has not significantly influenced political/civic life or municipal identities in most cities, are of concern. This suggests the need for research on why this has not transpired, for programs to improve local attitudes and media representations of visible minorities, and for local actors to consider more proactive measures to encourage the involvement of visible minorities in civic organizations.



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**Environics Research Group  
PN 6590**

**Opinion Leader Interviews: Final Questions  
Discussion agenda**

**Introduction**

Hello my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am calling from Environics Research Group.  
Just to confirm your name is \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this study which is led by researchers from the University of Western Ontario and Brock University. We are interviewing community leaders across Ontario about the costs and benefits of immigration and diversity in their communities.

We have requested that the interview be taped. All information collected through the interview is administered in accordance with the Privacy Act and will be treated as strictly confidential. The research team will not associate any of the opinions or information provided with particular individuals or organizations. The report of the results of the study will contain no information that could identify you or your organization.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

**START RECORDING**

**Main Interview**

- Is your municipal and/or regional government interested in seeing more immigration to the region? Why or why not?
  - Is immigration seen by community leaders as something important to the economic growth of your community? Why or why not?
  - Is immigration seen by community leaders as something that contributes to the social and cultural life of your community? Why or why not?
  - Is immigration seen by community leaders as something that contributes to the political and civic life of your community? Why or why not?
  - Is immigration seen by community leaders as something that contributes to the identity of your community? Why or why not?
- 
- **In your opinion**, what are the advantages of having more immigrants, including refugees, settle in your community?

- In your opinion, what are the disadvantages of having more immigrants, including refugees, settle in your community?
- Do you think that **members of your community** are interested in seeing more immigration to the region? Why or why not?
- Would you describe your community as one in which newcomers from other countries would feel welcome? Why or why not?
- Does your community have the capacity to serve the needs of recent immigrants? Why or why not?
- Does your community have the capacity to serve the needs of refugees? Why or why not?
- How, if at all, can your community improve the way in which it welcomes immigrants to the community?
- How, if at all, can your community improve the ability of immigrants to find meaningful work in the community?
- Would you describe your community as one in which visible minorities would feel welcome? Why or why not?

Now some final question about yourself.

How many years have you lived in (NAME OF COMMUNITY)?

Were you born in Canada or in another country?

People in Canada come from many racial and cultural groups. Are you..

**READ**

01 - White

02 - Chinese

03 - Latin American, Hispanic or Latino-Canadian (e.g. Mexican, Brazilian, Cuban etc...)

04 - Black or African-Canadian

05 - South Asian (e.g. Indo-Pakistani Canadian, Sri Lankan, Tamil Canadian etc...)

06 - East-Asian (e.g. Japanese, Korean)

07 - South-East Asian (e.g. Vietnamese, Cambodian, Thailand, Philippines etc...)

08 - Arab or West Asian (e.g. Persian, Turkish, Arab, Afghan etc...)

09 - Aboriginal

10 - Or another group?

99 - DK/NA

I want to ask about your ethnic ancestry, heritage or background. What were the ethnic or cultural origins of your ancestors?

And finally what is your age?

Thank you very much for participating in this study!

**ON THE TRANSCRIPT RECORD NAME OF COMMUNITY AND WHETHER  
RESPONDENT IS GOVERNMENT OR NON-GOVERNMENT / RECORD  
GENDER**

**IF ASKED:**

The research team for this study is led by:

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The website for more information is: [welcomingcommunities.ca](http://welcomingcommunities.ca)





























**Table 12: Perceptions of Government Interest and Attitudes About Immigration in 15 Communities (n)**

	Histor'al positive	Histor'al negative	Econ'ic Positive	Econ'ic Negative	Social-Cultural Positive	Social-Cultural Negative	Political-Civic Positive	Political-Civic Negative	Comm'ity or Civic Resources Positive	Comm'ity or Civic Resources Negative	Comm'ity Attitudes or Group Relations Positive	Comm'ity Attitudes or Group Relations Negative	Other
Municipal gov't interest?	8	0	<b>74</b>	4	15	1	16	9	7	2	15	2	16
Regional gov't interest?	0	0	<b>15</b>	0	3	0	0	1	5	0	5	1	1
Immigration important to economic growth?	1	0	<b>83</b>	10	6	1	14	3	6	1	18	7	14
Immigration contributes to social and cultural life?	4	0	8	0	<b>75</b>	5	9	1	8	2	30	5	18
Immigration contributes to political and civic life?	0	2	1	0	2	0	39	<b>50</b>	3	0	17	10	26
Immigration contributes to community identity?	6	7	9	1	19	6	6	8	3	2	<b>36</b>	14	29
Advantages of immigration?	1	0	52	2	<b>67</b>	1	3	0	3	1	38	1	9
Disadvantages of Immigration?	0	2	2	30	3	7	0	0	0	<b>41</b>	9	32	33

**Table 13: Perceptions of Community Interest, Receptivity and Community Capacity (n)**

	Hist'al Positive	Hist'al Negative	Econ'ic Positive	Econ'ic Negative	Social-Cultural Positive	Social-Cultural Negative	Political-Civic Positive	Political-Civic Negative	Comm'ity or Civic Resources Positive	Comm'ity or Civic Resources Negative	Comm'ity Attitudes or Group Relations Positive	Comm'ity Attitudes or Group Relations Negative	Other
Community members interested in more immigration?	3	3	15	13	6	2	1	0	3	1	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>	38
Is your community welcoming to newcomers?	3	1	2	2	9	2	2	0	35	10	<b>49</b>	27	21
Does your community have the capacity to serve recent immigrants?	3	0	1	6	1	0	11	6	<b>65</b>	47	4	0	16
Does your community have the capacity to serve refugees?	3	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	<b>47</b>	23	1	2	8
Would you describe your community as welcoming to visible minorities?	2	2	1	0	3	0	4	2	9	2	<b>68</b>	32	30

**Table 14: Perceptions about Required Remedial Actions (n)**

	<b>Economic</b>	<b>Social-Cultural</b>	<b>Political-Civic</b>	<b>Community Resources/Infrastructure</b>	<b>Community attitudes/group relations</b>	<b>Educational</b>
How can your community improve the way in which it welcomes immigrants to the community?	9	7	30	57	17	19
	<b>Government Policies/Programs</b>	<b>Business Sector/Firm Initiatives</b>	<b>NGO (other than business) initiatives</b>	<b>Community Member Attitudes/Initiatives</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>No action necessary</b>
How can your community improve the ability of immigrants to find meaningful work in the community?	56	36	15	22	14	13