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LETTERS

Comments on this edition of Canadian Diversity?
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Your letters may be edited for length and clarity.

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Laurie Carlson Berg, University of Regina and **Dr. Fadila Boutouchent**, University of Regina

The 17th National Metropolis Conference (Vancouver, March 2015) addressed many themes such as issues related to changes in policy and practice related to immigration in Canada. The previous federal government adopted many measures that are considered restrictive in terms of immigration-related matters. For instance, positions and outreach services have been cut. Also, psychological support for torture, rape and abuse victims were cut from the interim refugee program and policies pertaining to obtaining Canadian citizenship, family class immigration, foreign workers and refugees. These cuts raised many debates and questions.

In July 2015, the Association for Canadian Studies called for submissions about these themes to broaden the discussions about the challenges and opportunities determining settlements and integration in Canada; identifying with, participating in and belonging to both official language communities in Canada; and transculturality and establishing relations between newcomers and immigrants who have settled some time ago. Shortly after this call for submissions, the federal government held elections in 2015. In spite of a new government, these themes are still present in the media and public debates. These conversations and speeches seem to lump together the Syrian crisis, the threat of Islamic extremism, Islam and the Muslim veil. Indeed, what some people call the "veil debate" has become so crucial that it has either benefited or harmed the positions of the various political parties. What do these debates reveal about the various opinions Canadians have about our pluralistic society? Some discourses seem to normalize diversity, some refer to the "straw that broke the camel's back", and others encourage identification (different identities?) and questioning the dominant discourse. This issue offers different perspectives. The authors encourage readers to reconsider and rethink the impact of immigration practices and policies related to the development of respectful and mutual relations crucial to integration, civic participation and cultivating a sense of belonging to Canada, especially with the recent experience of researchers from Western Canada. This issue of *Canadian Diversity* contains a selection of articles about the main themes and articles of the 17th National Metropolis Conference (Vancouver 2015) and is likely to contribute to new discussions at the 18th National Metropolis Conference in Toronto in March 2016 and beyond.

This issue of *Canadian Diversity* starts with an article that champions public access to procedures and policies that allow the opening of a debate for an informed audience. Banting points out that changes made to the immigration policies throughout the last decade were not very transparent. Banting criticizes this process of change and calls it governance by surprise because it tends to keep critics off-balance. According to the author, this process mainly undermined the predictability of all involved by eroding trust in government and weakens accountability mechanism on which our conception of democracy rests. He believes it is time to put an end to parliamentary debates about citizenship, refugees and security if not replace this divide-and-rule policy with better integration opportunities.

In the second article, Jedwab questions whether annual and multi-annual planning consultations are really a matter of numbers. The author claims that there have been very few changes in annual immigration levels in the last few years. He took the opportunity to analyse the general theoretical discussion and to imply the importance of investing in public literacy about immigration. The article offers a new perspective on the data collected in Léger Marketing's March 2015 poll commissioned by the Association for Canadian Studies. The author believes it is important to augment literacy about immigration in anticipa-

tion of more significant public debates in the future. Jedwab, just like Banting, believes that informing better Canadians about immigration and its related issues may encourage a more rational public debates in which everybody wins, just as suggested by Pettigrew's scenario in the third article.

In this article, Pettigrew describes a win-win situation in which potential employers can play a key role in the hiring, settling and integration of newcomers. This article offers an overview of a big Canadian employer's successful experiment and identifies the policies put in effect for that purpose as well as organization's profit. The author claims that employers who can offer language training at lunch time, a mentorship program, and help with housing not only support the integration of newcomers, but also simultaneously ensure that loss of staff within their organization is minimal.

In the fourth article, Heinone and King offer another example of substantial gain. Both authors describe how resorting to cultural activities, recreation, arts and crafts, and focusing on family needs allows the creation of therapeutic landscapes for refugees in their cold, new home, Winnipeg. It's as if this article called on us, among other things, to think of customs and familiar habits through which immigrants and members of the host communities can create human, respectful and mutually beneficial bonds.

On another note, other authors examine the contributions of newcomers as well as the economic challenges they face. If the fifth article, Yoshida, Ramos and Vanderplaat discuss the economic contribution of newcomers in Nova Scotia. Their study shows that some families contribute considerably, if not surpass the economic expectations of the province. Tungohan and her contributors address another economic facet. They explored, in the sixth article, the socio-economic vulnerability of Filipina immigrants who have come via the live-in caregiver program. According to the authors, because these immigrants have no Canadian work experience, they must take costly and time-consuming upgrade classes that don't guaranty a job. Furthermore, having to feed their families adds to the pressure that is already on them. The authors discuss some of the modifications made to the program since 2014 which have led to some abuse. In regards to challenges, in the next articles, Pettigrew, Ashton and Galatsanou took a closer look at serviced aimed at increasing the immigrant population in rural regions of Canada's four Western provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba). The authors noted a considerable increase of newcomers of various ethnocultural and immigration backgrounds in some small communities in which infrastructure and immigrant settlement services are not always available. The authors identify areas that can be potentially improved.

In this very issue, there are also two articles that explore the social aspects of immigration. Bucklaschuk, Bhattacharyya, Wilkinson, Shen, Chowdhury and Edkins surveyed by telephone immigrants who landed in Canada between 2008 and 2012 to show that about two out of three immigrants did not access settlement services. Their results show a high percentage of immigrants that did not use service providers because their own networks could offer support. Their results also show a relatively high percentage of people who needed help from service providers, but did not seek them out as they were unaware that such services existed. The authors discuss the best ways to inform newcomers adequately. Also, Mata examines, more specifically, sociodemographic markers and features of the environments where immigrants choose to settle and their relationship with their neighbours. His study shows that immigrants generally do not interact with their neighbours even if they have been living in Canada for some time. The author suggests that programs that encourage immigrants to interact with their neighbours and that promotes a more participative citizenship, especially in negative areas, should be implemented. However, these interactions have already been linked to a sense of belonging to Canada, interaction with and participation in the host society.

In the field of education, Lenoir, in the tenth article, presents the relationship between schools and immigrant families. Her study is a reminder that school and family interactions are less than ideal. Generally, this fact is perceived as evident as most families integrate discourse related to this type of collaboration. However, families' involvement is minimal and is usually limited to parents following up on lessons at home. Her results suggest that there is room for dialogue and for improving collaboration between schools and families, an issue that has been talked about for decades.

The last three articles explore the challenges of certain immigrant communities. First, King presents results of a qualitative study on Rwandan refugees in Toronto. Results show that social isolation in the host society, being a refugee and its painful legacy all contribute to withdrawal and a feeling of isolation. The author examines policies and practices related to the challenge of social isolation. This study is one of the few that examines the consequences of genocide. Jing Zhao explores the low fertility rate of Chinese-Canadian women. According to the author, having children, although a person choice, have significant social outcomes. The comparative study shows that in spite of Canada's policies that favour fertility more than China's policies, socio-economic considerations, situational differences caused by the slowness of immigration and the settlement process may be the source of Chinese women's low fertility rates. Finally, Lingwei Qian explores the identity of two generations of Chinese-Canadians who have immigrated to Canada in the 1990s. The author notes that parents who are considered economic class immigrants are, as well as their children, are often highly educated. They face challenges related to the multiplicity of identities, knowledge of official languages and culture. They also face professional and civic challenges. The author reflects on the necessity of creating inclusive spaces open to new forms of identity and to the juxtaposition of identities.

In conclusion, this issue of *Canadian Diversity/Diversité Canadienne* offers an in-depth coverage of the topics discussed herein. Not only does this issue contain diverse immigration-related topics, but also covers specific needs that need to be met in order to better integrate Canadian values such as democracy, justice and equality. These articles present different points of view on migration backgrounds, if not, potential therapeutic landscapes that can be food for thought. These readings are ways to inform the general public and various social partners of policies, practices and the challenges of immigration in order to be better equipped and be more open to immigration. This issue reiterates the call to create inclusive spaces that are open to diversity.