THE GROWING RECOGNITION OF NEWCOMER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION IN CANADA AS A LOCAL IMPERATIVE

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As immigration policies become increasingly decentralized, it is of growing importance to learn about the individual and community-level factors that predict the successful recruitment and retention of immigrants. In this paper, I elaborate on the importance of these policies, and demonstrate how the provincial nominee program has affected the location choice of newcomers.

À mesure que les politiques d'immigration deviennent de plus en plus décentralisées, il est de plus en plus important de se renseigner sur les facteurs individuels et communautaires qui prédisent le recrutement et la rétention réussis d'immigrants. Dans cet article, je précise l'importance de ces politiques et montre comment le Programme des candidats des provinces a eu une incidence sur le choix des nouveaux arrivants en matière d'emplacement.

Aside from its largest cities, most of Canada is seeing declining employment rates, rising health care costs, and shrinking sources of labour supply. Most, though certainly not all, of the reasons for these challenges are demographic; as the proportion of young people in the population trends downward, the share of older Canadians continues to rise. Nowhere is this shift more evident than in Atlantic Canada.

The Atlantic region has grappled with dismally low rates of return on early childhood health, education, and infrastructure investments. The population has been too small a share to sustain the investments made by a province, and it has lost many of its best and brightest to other parts of Canada and the world.

Although as a region Atlantic Canada felt the sting worst, it is certainly not alone. Even in Ontario, Canada's indisputable demographic powerhouse, the farther you go from a major city (especially Toronto), the more the local population looked, and looks, like that of a demographic have-not province.

The low fertility, population aging, and high rates of out-migration that exist for populations living in roughly 95 percent of Canada's land mass make an obvious case for increased immigration – replace domestic out-migrants with international in-migrants. But, the historical record shows that newcomers to Canada tend to settle in the same locations as internal migrants, so rather than ameliorate a population distribution challenge, many immigrants have instead

exacerbated infrastructure mismatch.[1]

Thankfully for these demographic have-nots, a new chapter on Canada's population history is currently being written, one where sub-national governments – provinces, and, increasingly, municipalities – are emerging as key players in the quest to attract and retain newcomers.

PROVINCIAL NOMINEE PROGRAMS

As provinces realized that Federal selection schemes did not always serve their goals of population rejuvenation, they began to push for some control of the selection process. An early response to this from the Federal Government was the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP). Table 1 lists the program enactment dates by province.

TABLE 1: YEAR OF INTRODUCTION OF PROVINCIAL NOMINEE PROGRAM, BY PROVINCE

Province/Territory	Date of First Signed PNP Agreement	Start of PN Program in P/T
Newfoundland and Labrador	September 1, 1999	1999
New Brunswick	February 22, 1999	1999
Manitoba	October 22, 1996	1999
Prince Edward Island	March 29, 2001	2001
Saskatchewan	March 16, 1998	2001
British Columbia	April 19, 1998	2001
Alberta	March, 2002	2002
Yukon	April, 2001	2002
Nova Scotia	August 27, 2002	2003
Ontario	November 21, 2005	2007
Northwest Territories	August, 2009	2009

Source: Government of Canada 2012

As provinces began to control more of their demographic destiny, they became more invested in immigrant recruitment. Provincial officials would travel to other countries, often alongside Federal officials via the Destination Canada initiative, promoting the benefits of living in their province.

At first glance, however, it appears as though these programs did very little to affect the location choices of newcomers to Canada. Table 2 lists the intended destination provinces of immigrants by year and shows that provincial nominee programs did very little to affect the flow of migrants.

If the story ended here, we would conclude that there are no discernable effects of the provincial nominee program on location choice for newcomers to Canada. As is often the case, however, the full story appears to be more complex.

If we switch focus away from looking at settlement across provinces, and focus instead on whether immigrants intend to settle in a major urban centre or if they instead choose one of Canada's less urban destinations within a province, a different picture emerges. In Table 3, we look at principal applicants between the ages of 18 and 64 only, and only at 1996-2009 arrivals, to ensure that we have independent results that capture the years around the introduction of Provincial Nominee Programs. The results are from a logistic

1 Although it is true that several federal initiatives over the years have tried to influence where newcomers live in Canada, most of the programs have had relatively limited success.

TABLE 2: INTENDED DESTINATION PROVINCES OF IMMIGRANTS BY YEAR

Landing Province	Year of Landing						
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
NF	581	414	402	424	417	392	404
NB	717	663	724	659	758	798	705
MB	3,933	3,702	2,997	3,725	4,635	4,591	4,615
PE	150	144	136	135	189	135	108
SK	1,814	1,733	1,564	1,728	1,882	1,704	1,667
BC	52,023	47,845	35,975	36,122	37,428	38,482	34,057
AB	13,897	12,831	11,187	12,095	14,363	16,405	14,783
NS	3,224	2,833	2,043	1,595	1,608	1,698	1,419
ON	119,723	117,733	92,400	104,167	133,510	148,641	133,588

Landing Province	Year of Landing							% Change
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
NF	359	579	497	508	546	627	606	-1.7%
NB	666	795	1,091	1,646	1,643	1,856	1,913	15.0%
MB	6,503	7,426	8,096	10,047	10,954	11,218	13,523	24.4%
PE	154	310	330	565	992	1,454	1,759	-20.0%
SK	1,668	1,943	2,119	2,724	3,516	4,835	6,890	-2.2%
BC	35,229	37,028	44,770	42,083	38,961	43,992	41,439	-11.5%
AB	15,893	16,475	19,404	20,716	20,861	24,199	27,017	7.1%
NS	1,474	1,771	1,929	2,586	2,523	2,651	2,388	20.1%
ON	119,722	125,094	140,525	125,892	111,315	110,878	106,867	-0.4%

Source: The Permanent Resident Data System (PRDS)

regression where the outcome of interest is living outside a major Census Metropolitan Area.

The first noteworthy trend is the increase in the proportion of newcomers that choose to live outside of Canada's largest cities. Aside from all other variables included in this model, it seems that there is still a growing tendency to settle in smaller centres.

Demographic and educational characteristics, though all statistically significant, do little to affect destination choice.

There are significant differences across source region. Newcomers from other parts of North America and the United Kingdom were both roughly twice as likely to avoid Canada's major cities than Europeans are. Africans, Filipinos, Latin Americans, and Asians were more likely to choose our biggest cities.

Finally, turning to admission category, we see a fairly large and positive coefficient for Provincial Nominees. People that landed in Canada under this provincial selection scheme were more than four times as likely to live outside a major urban centre than other immigrants.

Although the same is true for Refugees and members of the Family Class, the magnitudes are not as large, strongly suggesting that the introduction of the Provincial Nominee Program is helping all of Canada enjoy the benefits of immigration. These results are robust to various model specifications.

PROVINCIAL NOMINEE PROGRAMS AFFECT WHERE PEOPLE LIVE

The Provincial Nominee Program represents one of the more durable programs for affecting the location choices of immigrants. By corresponding directly with provincial officials, prospective newcomers have an opportunity to learn about lesser-known parts of the country. Although movement to gateway cities remains strong, the movement appears to be slowing suggesting that the program is helping to encourage immigrants to give other parts of Canada a try. Our results suggest that although the program does not appear to affect choice of province, it does affect location within provinces.

TABLE 3: DETERMINANTS OF RESIDING OUT OF A MAJOR CITY

Years or landing		
1996	Ref.	
1997	0.876	***
1998	0.894	***
1999	0.920	***
2000	0.909	***
2001	0.838	***
2002	0.876	***
2003	0.967	***
2004	1.024	
2005	1.034	*
2006	1.095	***
2007	1.131	***
2008	1.164	***
2009	1.210	***
Demographic Characteristics		
Age	1.000	
Married	1.045	***
Male	1.031	
Education		
Trades	1.058	***
Bachelor or More	0.883	***
Source Region		
North America	2.216	***
United Kingdom	1.973	***
Africa	0.755	***
The Phillipines	0.464	***
Latin America	0.618	***
Asia	0.401	***
Admission Categories		
Provincial Nominee Program	4.317	***
Refugee	1.477	***
Family	1.527	***
Other	Ref.	

* p <0.05 ** p <0.01*** p < 0.001

Source: The Permanent Resident Data System (PRDS)

In recent years, the recognition of immigration as a local issue has been gaining even more traction, with Atlantic Canada initiating its own pilot program for recruitment and retention. Additionally, a growing number of municipalities are launching immigration strategies, suggesting that the future may contain even more localized programs. If the Provincial Nominee Program is any indication, it is possible that these local initiatives will further encourage newcomers to live outside of Canada's big cities.

REFERENCES

Government of Canada. *Evaluation of the Provincial Nominee Program*. Last modified January 24, 2012. www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/provincial-nominee-program/section-3.html.