VISIBLE MINORITIES IN MULTICULTURAL CANADA'S FUTURE

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ABSTRACT

The author answers the following questions on the topic of the 2017 Projections data:

1) How did the multicultural character of Canada evolve between 1967 and 2007 (in qualitative and quantitative terms) and what would be the outlook for 2017 (the 150th anniversary of the confederation)? What are the social and economic impacts over 1967-2017 (50-year period)? What are the risks and opportunities between now and 2017?
2) How would we ensure that our social and economic programs and policies meet the changing needs of an increasingly diverse population in light of the 2017 projections?
3) What approaches could be used to ensure that Canadian cities are well prepared to accommodate the rising proportions of visible minorities in their populations and what indicators would measure the results?
4) What factors contribute to better labour market outcomes for Canadian-born visible minorities and visible minority immigrants?
5) What policies and programs can prevent potential marginalization of visible minorities in major urban centres by 2017?
6) What approaches could be used to promote diversity in rural communities in Canada? What indicators could be used to measure this progress?

In the early 1960s, Canada's immigration policy became non-discriminatory in that no one could be prevented from emigrating to Canada for reasons of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, citizenship, etc. This resulted in a change in the character of the immigrant stream and hence, a dramatic change in Canada's ethnic and cultural composition. Prior to the 1960s, immigrants were predominantly European. After the policy change, non-European immigrants began to come to Canada in large numbers. Non-European countries quickly were among the top ten immigrant source countries. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)'s immigration data, nine of the ten leading source countries of immigrants to Canada were European in 1951 and the tenth was the the United States. By 1968, Hong Kong became the first non-European country to become one of the top ten immigrant source countries. In 2005, seven of the top ten source countries were non-European, two were European, with the other being the United States.

The increasing ethno-cultural diversity of Canada's population and growth of the visible minority population has been mainly due to immigration patterns and increasing levels of immigration. World events such as ethnic conflict and war have been instrumental in orchestrating some of the patterns of non-European immigration and in increasing the diversity of ethnic populations residing in Canada. Higher fertility, a relatively young age structure and lower mortality are other factors that are contributing to the growth of Canada's visible minority populations. If ethnic diversity is measured by the number of ethnic groups in Canada, it is important to note that by the time of the 2001 Census, there were over 200 different ethnic or cultural groups living in Canada.

The change in the character of the immigrant steam has resulted in a major increase in the number and proportion of visible minority populations in Canada. According to the 1981 Census of Canada, visible minorities comprised 4.7 percent of the population compared to 13.4 percent at the time of the 2001 Census. Furthermore, according to Statistics Canada's population projections, the overall number and proportion of visible minorities is expected to increase by 2017 – no matter which growth scenario is utilized. Ten of the visible minority groups that will see major population increases by 2017 are as follows: Chinese, South Asians, Blacks, Filipinos, Latin Americans, South-East Asians, Arabs, West Asians, Koreans and the Japanese. The largest visible minorities will continue to be the Chinese and South Asian groups. The projections go on to say that almost half of all visible minority individuals would belong to one of these two ethnic groups by 2017. The proportion of the population that will be foreign born by 2017 is projected to be around 22 percent, which is equal to the highest proportions of the twentieth century. Most of these immigrants will be visible minorities.

The social impacts of increasing ethnocultural diversity since 1967 include an increasingly larger visible minority population, a large number of highly educated immigrants who are unable to work in the occupations for which they are

trained, increasing numbers of individuals who adhere to non-Christian religions and increases in ethnic, religious and racial intermarriage.

The risks over the next ten years of increasing numbers of visible minorities could include an increase in racism and discrimination, particularly in the labour market. The health care sector is a case in point. As the population ages, Canadians of the Caucasian race (of European background) will be cared for and ministered to by health care workers who could be mainly visible minorities. Cultural and language differences could result in misunderstandings of needs, ways of doing things and poor communication between patients and staff. The end result may be resentment on the part of the patients as well as on the part of the caregivers. This is already noticeable in many of Canada's long term care centres. Continued income disparity between visible minorities in the labour force and the Canadian-born British is also likely to prevail.

Better labour market outcomes for both foreign-born and Canadian-born visible minorities can, in part, be achieved through enforcement of Canada's *Employment Equity Act*, presenting awards by governments at the federal and provincial levels for the implementation of diversity in the workplace, and through the recognition of individuals who have made major contributions to Canadian society.

In addition, Kalbach and Kalbach's research has shown that immigrants in the labour force who work in the Prairies have incomes that are more congruent to Canadian-born salaries than they do in the large CMAS of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. While there are still income gaps between groups in the Prairies, the differences are not as great. Immigrants would be more likely to settle in the Prairies if the Prairie Provinces applied for more provincial nominees to fill their labour force needs. Labour force outcomes would also be improved through free apprenticeships or job shadowing, which would lead to accreditation in Canada, and by making language training available for both men and women for as long as needed to be able to function in their field. Accreditation examinations should be given in a timely manner after an individual takes part in such programmes.

One of the best ways to ensure better labour market outcomes is to give potential immigrants the information they need regarding the job market in Canada so they can make a more informed decision before they choose to immigrate to Canada. A more drastic solution is to bring in only those immigrants who will have positive labour market experiences in terms of their intended occupation and/or to match an immigrant with an employer before entry to Canada. Another possibility is to make sure prospective immigrants are accredited in their field before coming to Canada.

Getting Canadian experience is always difficult for immigrants. Groups such as immigrant service agencies could provide programmes in consultation with the municipal and provincial governments to provide an immigrant with "Canadian experience". Funding for this kind of initiative would go a long way towards ensuring that immigrants have a successful labour market experience.

The favoured destinations of immigrants have long been the CMAs of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. According to the population projections for 2017, this will still be the case at that time, although the other CMAs will also see increase in their visible minority populations. If some of the less populated areas in Canada, i.e., the Prairies, encourage their provincial governments to make use of the provincial nominee programme and make an effort to work with the federal government in order to have a greater say in the type of immigrants they need, there will be greater congruency between jobs available and immigrants' skill. If these steps are taken, immigration is more likely to increase. Once visible minority families begin to establish themselves in smaller cities, it is likely other members of their family and friends will come as well, especially if the "first settlers" have a satisfactory experience. One measure of whether immigrants are moving to smaller centres could be mapping indexes of relative concentration and looking at indexes of diversity for Canada's cities and CMAs.

Three of the most important and effective tools Canada has could be used more effectively to ensure a meaningful social and economic experience for visible minorities and for all ethnic groups in Canada. These tools are the *Employment Equity Act*, the *Multiculturalism Act* and our *Canadian Human Rights Act.* Together they have "the teeth" needed to effect change. Together they could be used to help ensure that visible minorities and other ethnic or cultural groups are treated equally and with respect in Canadian society socially or economically. Another powerful tool is education. Government needs to educate all Canadians about Canada's ethno-cultural groups in an effort to promote a greater understanding and harmony between them all.

Much has been said regarding the disconnection felt by Canada's second generation visible minority youth. One such young man said, "He plans to introduce bits of Canadiana into the next generation, and dreams of teaching his children to skate and of taking them on vacation to somewhere other than India" (*Globe and Mail*, February, 2007). Perhaps the third generation will have an even more positive overall experience in Canadian society then either their parents or grandparents may have had.

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