

National Metropolis Conference
Pre-Conference Session on Francophone Immigration to Canada
March 18, 2010
Montréal, Québec

** This report was written by Mathieu Wade, Université de Moncton.*

On this fourth pre-conference day on Francophone immigration to Canada, held in Montréal on March 18, 2010, during the 12th National Metropolis Conference, participants took stock of the immigration situation in French-speaking Canada, the progress in recent years, and the challenges that remain. The exponential increase in registrations for this pre-conference session over the past four years and the rise in the number of scholarly publications attest to the fact that Francophone immigration to Canada is becoming increasingly relevant and complex, as it draws government, academic and private-sector stakeholders to the table. The theme of this year's session provides greater opportunity for these stakeholders to share information, best practices, and front-line experience. With the objectives of genuine sharing and stock-taking, two compilations were developed and introduced over the past year: one on best practices; and the other on current research.

The first half of the day featured presentations from federal government representatives from the Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and the Department of Canadian Heritage; as well as representatives from the provinces (Manitoba, Quebec and New Brunswick); from community associations (*Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne* (FCFA)); and from the academic sector (Quebec's Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS)). A speech from Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages, rounded out the morning's presentations.

Stakeholders gathered during the second half of the day for two forums focussed on the following questions:

- Are the roles and responsibilities for Francophone immigration in Canada effectively distributed among the three orders of government?
Are the cited objectives essential, realistic, well publicized, accepted by Canadians and effectively measured?

- What policy or program changes are needed to assist communities in forming partnerships to meet the constantly evolving needs of an increasingly diversified clientele?
What role do non-governmental organizations play in the attraction, integration and retention of Francophone immigrants in Canada?

Guy Jourdain

Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie

The Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie, initiated in 1994, plays an important role in interprovincial cooperation and in ensuring the vitality of the Francophone culture and communities in Canada. This is the first collaborative effort between the Ministerial Conference and the Metropolis Secretariat. The Ministerial Conference has been addressing immigration issues since the 2006 publication of *Francophonie: Issues, Challenges and Future Directions*. This report, which emerged as a result of cross-Canada consultations, provides an overview of the situation in French-speaking Canada and suggests options for action, particularly in immigration, an area that has experienced considerable progress over the past 10 years due to the concerted efforts of all stakeholders. However, significant challenges remain for the demographic growth of Canada's Francophonie, and all levels of government are being called to action.

Overview

Yves Saint-Germain

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

CIC has used the 2006 *Strategic Plan to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities* and the 2008 *Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2008-2013: Acting for the Future* as a frame of reference for its work on immigration to Francophone minority communities. These two documents, which came about as the result of increased cooperation between the federal, provincial and territorial governments and communities, build on the conclusions drawn during the FCFA's Dialogue tour from 1999 to 2001.

Starting in the 1990s, Canada has welcomed an average of 250,000 immigrants annually (from all categories, including family, economic, and humanitarian and compassionate), which represents just under 1% of the total population. From 2000 until 2004—before the adoption of the *Strategic Plan*—an average of 194,000 immigrants settled outside Quebec annually. Of these, 1% stated that the official language they spoke was French. This could lead to an imbalance in Canada's demographic growth in favour of English-speaking communities. Consequently, the government set an annual target of 4.4% Francophone immigration outside Quebec. This target, which is to remain in effect until 2023, is integral to the government's five major objectives:

- increase the number of French-speaking immigrants
- strengthen the demographic weight of Francophone minority communities (FMCs)
- improve the capacity of FMCs to receive Francophone newcomers
- strengthen FMCs' reception and settlement infrastructures
- to foster the regionalization of Francophone immigration outside Toronto and Vancouver.

To achieve these objectives, CIC is working with the FCFA, regional development agencies, various federal government departments, and the provinces and territories. An intermediate goal of 1.8% of Francophone immigrants settling outside Quebec by 2013 was established (or double the rate prior to the *Strategic Plan*), to remain in place until 2013. This initially included persons born abroad whose first language was French or who knew French. That definition being too vague and not being compatible with established objectives, it was revised to include persons whose first language is

French, as well as persons who have French as their primary official language. The permanent residence application package will also be modified to include a question that will more effectively measure annual developments in Francophone immigration: if an applicant's first language is neither French nor English, they will be asked which language they intend to use most frequently: French, English, or another language.

The *Statistical Portrait of the French-Speaking Immigrant Population Outside Quebec*, published in April 2010, discusses the importance of the criteria used to define French-speaking immigrants. The criteria used have a discernable impact on the number of French-speaking immigrants identified and on their proportion relative to the Canadian population. Moving beyond tallying the number of immigrants, host communities must be equipped with the tools needed to support new arrivals at each stage of their settlement. With this in mind, it should be noted that the Francophone network is expanding and that more service points are offering services in French. Increased provincial involvement, the redefinition of the selection criterion, and greater cooperation among stakeholders should make it possible to reach the intermediate target of having 1.8% of Francophone immigrants settling outside Quebec by 2013.

Perspectives on the Growing Diversity of French-Speaking Canada: Identities and Shared Spaces

Hubert Lussier

Canadian Heritage

Although *Canadian Heritage* is part of the archaeological record of Francophone immigration to Canada, its direct role in Francophone immigration has become relatively modest. CIC plays a leading role in front-line immigration issues, while *Canadian Heritage* works in the broader sense to enhance the vitality of minority Francophone communities' vitality—particularly linguistic and cultural aspects. CIC having established important partnerships at the provincial and community levels, the role of Canadian Heritage has more to do with identity; consequently the Department focuses on bringing forth issues, generating discussions and focussing on the evolution of identity in Canadian society in order to inform decision-makers' thinking.

Dispelling the myth that Canada's minority Francophone communities are homogeneous and rural, over 40% of Francophones throughout Canada's provinces and territories were born in another province or country. This mobile French fact belies the notion of "old-stock" French-Canadian communities. Large urban centres outside Quebec, such as Toronto and Vancouver, have high rates of Francophones born outside Canada. Also, Canada's official language minority communities have rates of ethnic diversity that are comparable to those of English-speaking communities outside large urban centres and considerably higher than those of Francophone communities in Quebec outside Montréal. In fact, more than 40% of new immigrants to Canada's Francophone minority communities are members of visible minorities and, for half of them, French is not their first language. Furthermore, 10% of Francophones in minority communities were born abroad and the number of new arrivals settling in Francophone minority communities increased by 34% from 1996 to 2006.

These findings highlight identity issues for these often fragile communities—particularly since language assimilation appears to also affect immigrant populations. In this regard, it is important to ask ourselves how best to fully integrate these populations into Francophone networks and institutions, as well as economic and cultural life—in short, how best to make each of them "one of us".

This question leads to the more basic question of Canadian citizenship and the individual's

participation in society. Identity is closely intertwined with our activities as citizens and our willingness to commit to the community. An obsession with finding the essential definition of who is Canadian is not conducive to building responsible citizenship. We would do better to rely on shared experience, without demanding homogeneity in terms of identity or citizenship.

It remains to be seen whether, in focusing on local immigration efforts, we have neglected the pan-Canadian Francophone reality. While immigrants settle successfully in one location where a number of resources are available them and where they can develop a network, and while it is imperative that these communities have the capacity to welcome them effectively, we cannot ignore the fact that they have immigrated to Canada, where there is a pan-Canadian French presence to which they belong. Ideally, the immigrant's will be aware—thanks in part to radio and television—that they are part of a language and a culture that is articulated from sea to sea to sea, instead of feeling that they have been catapulted into a single community.

Provincial and Territorial Achievements, Issues and Challenges: Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie

A panel discussion was held among the Manitoba, New Brunswick, Ontario and Quebec government representatives on the provinces' role in Francophone immigration to Canada.

Guy Jourdain

Manitoba Francophone Affairs Secretariat

Like a number of other provinces, Manitoba has signed an agreement with the federal government that gives the province some latitude in immigration matters and also includes a language clause. The principal component of the Canada-Manitoba immigration agreement, the Provincial Nomination Program (PNP), allows the province to tailor recruitment strategies to meet its current needs, particularly for labour. The Manitoba government has set a goal of welcoming 10,000 immigrants annually, 7% of whom would be French-speaking, and of increasing that number to 20,000 by 2017. This is designed to maintain the demographic weight of Franco-Manitobans and to decelerate their assimilation.

French-speaking and English-speaking communities do not attract the same ratios of refugees and immigrants in the economic class. The proportion of refugees is markedly higher in French-speaking communities, which dictates the need for specific services. In Manitoba the federal and provincial governments help fund the establishment of reception and settlement networks, the largest of which is *Accueil francophone*, in Saint-Boniface. *Accueil francophone* offers a range of services for new arrivals, from an airport shuttle service to assistance with housing, school registration and employment. The *Agence nationale and internationale du Manitoba* (ANIM) conducts missions abroad in order to recruit entrepreneurs and create new Francophone markets. As well, the Economic Development Council for Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities (CEDM) offers support to entrepreneurs and businesses.

Francophone immigration is a demographic lifesaver for Manitoba, and increases the demand for services, thus justifying investment in reception and settlement services.

Yvan Turcotte
Government of Quebec

Quebec's endeavours to francize immigrants to Quebec, which started in the 1960s, were largely the result of concerns for the future of French in Quebec and Canada. At that time, statistics showed a declining birthrate among Francophones and a higher proportion of English-speaking immigrants, which together combined to erode the demographic, cultural and political weight of French-speaking Quebec residents.

Quebec has adopted a two-pronged approach to the francization of immigrants. Firstly, the province seeks to increase the flow of immigrants who already know French. The selection checklist for immigrants is heavily weighted on the language question, while promotion strategies focus on French-speaking regions and immigrants in the worker class. These measures have produced results. In 1989, 28% of immigrants admitted to Quebec stated that they knew French; by 2009, this figure had reached 69%.

Secondly, Quebec is actively working to francize immigrants, particularly by means of courses made available on the Internet and at educational institutions (schools, CÉGEPs and universities).

We are now witnessing a recent increase in the number of immigrants who know both French and English. Since statistics cannot predict what effect this fact will have on language transfer, it could pose a challenge. A recent Supreme Court ruling on a potential increase in attendance at English-language schools poses yet another challenge for francization. Given that schools have been Quebec's main means of francization of its immigrants, this ruling could undermine Quebec's efforts.

Benoit Locas
New Brunswick's Population Growth Secretariat

New Brunswick's Population Growth Secretariat is made up of four components: immigration; settlement and multiculturalism; repatriation and attraction; and retention.

Under the *Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2008-2013: Acting for the Future*, New Brunswick signed an agreement with the federal government that sets out five objectives:

- to increase the number of immigrants to French-speaking communities
- to build an infrastructure for settlement
- to enhance the complementarity of provincial programs
- to facilitate economic and cultural integration.

Particular emphasis is to be placed on setting up reception and settlement networks in New Brunswick's French-speaking communities. As such, communities will be involved in the process as much as possible, by setting up Immigration and Multiculturalism Committees that will facilitate participation by community associations and the business sector in each community. These stakeholders set up reception centres for immigrants that will focus on settlement, employment assistance, and francization. The government is hoping to create stronger feelings of belonging as a result of this cooperation, which, in turn, will benefit both the communities and the new arrivals.

Daniel Cayen

Ontario's Office of Francophone Affairs (OAC)

No discussion of French-speaking Ontario can be had without mentioning the *French Language Services Act*, which was adopted over 20 years ago. Under this legislation, which gives all Franco-Ontarians access to services in their language, Ontario's Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration is committed to providing services in French to the many immigrants who settle in the province. Ontario has Canada's largest Francophone population outside Quebec. Like the Ontario population as a whole—which is Canada's most diversified—Ontario's French-speaking communities are also multicultural. Over 10% of Franco-Ontarians are members of visible minorities, and 14% were born abroad (one-third of French-speaking immigrants come from Europe and one-quarter from Africa). These statistics are attributable generally to new policies and, more specifically, to the creation of the CIC Francophone Minority Communities Steering Committee.

The OAC is responsible for protecting the interests of Ontario's Francophones and for ensuring that services are available in French. Like CIC, the Ontario government revised its definition of who is a French-speaking immigrant in order to include persons whose first language is neither French nor English but who speak French at home. This revised definition has made it possible to increase Ontario's Francophone population by 10%.

Since employment is a vital aspect of integration, Ontario will devote considerable funding to bridge training centres, which will allow new arrivals to have their credentials recognized in Canada. Some projects will focus specifically on French-speaking immigrants who have trained abroad.

Ontario's Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration will also conduct a survey in the spring of 2010 regarding the level of services available to French-speaking immigrants in Ontario. A report on best practices, issues and challenges will be published at the conclusion of the survey.

Nicole Gallant

INRS

In some ways, the community sector acts as a parallel level of government—one that is indispensable for immigration to Francophone minority communities. Three types of community stakeholders are active in immigration matters: front-line associations; provincial associations and their umbrella organization, the FCFA; and ethnic and multi-ethnic associations.

Associations in the last group have been involved the longest. They offer special assistance to immigrants during the settlement and integration process, and tend to be at the forefront for best practices due to their informal nature.

The provincial associations and the FCFA spearheaded bringing the issue of Francophone immigration to the attention of the public, mainly because of demographic concerns; and they are the only associations to facilitate debate on the ensuing changes in identity.

The front-line organizations have a critical role to play since they are able to refer immigrants to the various French-language institutions in each community. As referral agencies to the Francophone sphere (including schools, banks and cultural activities), they allow new arrivals to become part of a group and to create a sense of community belonging. However, these associations often work in

isolation from each other and are not necessarily aware of what is being done elsewhere in Canada. Consequently, a compilation of best practices has been published, and the INRS and the FCFA have created an online database to enable associations across Canada to communicate with each other and share their experiences.

Suzanne Bossé

FCFA

The community's contribution to Francophone immigration and their various methods of cooperating with all levels of government are crucial in reaching the immigration targets set for 2023. The community's role is based on the following five tenets:

1. The community sector puts forward a **vision**. After the Dialogue tour, the community sector publicized the importance of diversity and made a commitment to reach the target of 4.4% of Francophone immigrants outside Quebec and to improving their economic integration.
2. The community sector promotes network-wide **mobilization** of stakeholders in immigration matters, particularly in health care and education. Four provinces have already set up networks with coordinators, five provinces are in the process of doing so, and Yukon and the Northwest Territories are discussing the possibility of doing so.
3. The community sector is a centre of **cooperation** and coordination among stakeholders with various areas of expertise, making it possible to develop tools such as newsletters, updates and Destination Canada missions.
4. The community sector acts as an **agent of change** in society, by bringing debates to the attention of the public, particularly by raising public awareness of diversity issues in the media and creating forums for debate.
5. Lastly, the community sector offers a **dynamic approach** that promotes partnerships among the communities and the various levels of government (in particular, the partnership between CIC and the communities).

Graham Fraser

Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada

Although immigration to Francophone minority communities (FMCs) is quite a recent issue that goes back barely 10 years, considerable progress has been made since this issue has been on the political agenda. In fact, while Francophones from all over the world have long chosen to settle in Canada, awareness among community leaders that immigration is a way of the future and a breath of life has given this issue the necessary impetus to bring communities and politicians together around shared objectives, as can now be seen from the size of the Metropolis Conference.

Although FMCs represent 4.4% of the population of Canada outside Quebec, they receive less than 2% of immigrants to Canada. They often do not have all the resources they need to receive and effectively integrate newcomers. The capacity of these communities to participate fully in the immigration process is crucial in maintaining and enhancing linguistic balance and cultural diversity in Canada; to this end, FMCs must be able to receive, integrate and retain newcomers who have no experience with the language struggles and claims that have formed FMCs and that make the immigrants' otherness all the more apparent. But these challenges are not confined to Canada's French-speaking communities. In fact, from one generation to the next, the definition of who is Canadian becomes broader and richer, absorbing traditional tensions.

French-speaking communities have taken up the challenge of changing identity quickly and smoothly. This process depends on four factors: new Canadians' commitment to the French language from one generation to the next; the priority given to immigration by many educational and other organizational networks; the responsibility assumed by the associations sector, and Canadians' openness and willingness to redefine themselves; and academic research.

In addition to the leadership of the associations sector, cooperation among all levels of government and civil society is vital to successful integration. In fact, immigration calls into play a broad range of stakeholders and engages all of Canadian society. Sharing best practices is a prerequisite for integration, provided that best practices are not perceived as a buffet from which people may pick and choose. It must be acknowledged that certain practices are more successful and have higher priority than others, and that this acknowledgement is only the first step in a coherent, concerted approach. For example, it is crucial to establish initial contact in French and to refer immigrants to French-language institutions such as schools, hospitals, and cultural events. It must also be recognized that immigrants' needs and realities are varied and that an effective integration strategy must take diversity realities into account.

Lastly, bilingualism in Canada is experiencing a shift. The minority English-speaking community realizes that bilingualism is undeniably a stepping stone to success; similarly, minority French-speaking communities are obliged to accept that, if immigrants are to become fully integrated into Canadian society, they must learn English. These facts are social and economic realities for the minority communities.

For Canada, now is a time of intense thinking and talking about our approach to cultural diversity and immigration; the concepts of multiculturalism, interculturalism and pluralism; and the additional challenges of the linguistic duality context. We must be careful to see cultural diversity and linguistic duality as being, not exclusive, but complementary: Adrienne Clarkson and Michaëlle Jean are eloquent examples of this reality, demonstrating that the national conversation takes place in both languages and in diversity.

Forums on Francophone Immigration

The second half of this pre-conference day on Francophone immigration took the form of two forums that brought together various stakeholders and researchers working on immigration issues. Each forum focused on a general question with two subquestions.

Forum 1

1. Are the roles and responsibilities of the three orders of government effectively distributed in Francophone immigration in Canada? Are the targets and objectives realistic and accepted by Canadians?

Chedly Belkhodja
University of Moncton

Managing immigration issues is clearly more complex today than it has been in the past. Individuals are more mobile, there are more stakeholders in immigration issues, and migrant populations are more diverse. In this context, governance is a crucial concept, particularly in minority communities where responsibility for health care and education, for example, has been assumed in part by civil society. Francophone immigration is a recent issue and, for the moment, governance in this area is less developed than in others. Firstly, the appearance of diversity in FMCs is relatively recent. As well, the imperative of diversity brings with it the challenge of rethinking the governance strategies that have been used thus far and that have often focused on consensus and shared issues. Concrete action has been taken and goals have been set. However, the goals that Canada's FMCs have set for themselves must not be the sole criterion for successful immigration. In addition to a goal of 4.4% of French-speaking immigrants to be reached by 2023, the effective integration those immigrants into Canadian society and into their community must be a goal as well. There is also work to be done in terms of valuing the diversity of provenance of immigrants to Canada, in comparison with the situation in Europe, for example, where migratory flows are much more localized.

Lastly, the roles of the three levels of government are relatively well defined, with the exception of the municipal level, although that fact is characteristic of municipalities. The important thing is to work on coordination between the levels of government. It is also important to monitor closely and to analyze critically the practices that have been used. Since the local level is the most concrete level—where services are provided and where immigrants settle—it would also be advantageous to decompartmentalize immigration issues and to integrate them into other areas of activity and debate such as health care, culture and urban development.

Roda Muse

Industry Canada

When the *Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2008-2013: Acting for the Future* was introduced in 2008, Industry Canada committed itself to the Economic Development Initiative (EDI), with the goals of new expertise development, innovation, partnerships and economic diversification. The EDI has two aspects: community strategic planning, designed to enhance the economic base and the competitiveness of FMCs; and business and economic development projects designed to allow participants to acquire skills, particularly through work training programs available to immigrants and other persons.

From an economic standpoint, Canada's FMCs would benefit from optimizing the large numbers of immigrants from Africa in order to open up new markets. The potential of immigration is not limited to demographic growth and cultural vitality. Immigrants' rich identity and geographic mobility are real economic assets, not only for the country as a whole but also for the host communities.

One of the main challenges for Industry Canada is the fact that there is no compilation of economic development initiatives to which citizens can refer. Also, Industry Canada programs for immigrants are not specifically directed at French-speaking immigrants. Lastly, Industry Canada needs to be more present in the Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) Francophone Minority Communities Steering Committee and in the FMCs. Nevertheless, there is program complementarity and a series of signed agreements with the provinces that include linguistic clauses and clear objectives. While objectives are not the sole criterion of success of government action, they are necessary for the purposes of accountability. At the same time, it is important to conduct public awareness campaigns, particularly about racism, as a condition of successful integration by immigrants and their acceptance among Canadians.

Jacques Leroux

Ministère de l'immigration and des communautés culturelles [Quebec department of immigration and cultural communities]

Quebec enjoys significant autonomy in immigration matters, and devotes most of its efforts to language issues. Quebec has developed expertise in this area, with numerous programs, enriched in 2008, designed to intensify francization in Quebec. Quantification is important in this regard, making it possible to assess how many immigrants make use of the services provided and, using standardized tests, to evaluate the effectiveness of francization measures, which fall into three main categories:

- earlier francization
- better francization
- more francization.

Quebec begins the process of earlier francization in immigrants' country of origin. Quebec has partnerships with organizations abroad that offer courses on French and Quebec culture, as well as standardized tests; the cost of those courses is reimbursed when immigrants reach Quebec. There is also an online course created by the Ministère de l'immigration and des communautés culturelles [Quebec department of immigration and cultural communities] (MICC). In terms of better francization, Quebec offers refresher courses tailored to the occupational sector. Lastly, more francization means reaching as many persons as possible, particularly through the MICC and businesses.

Les Linklater

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Today, Canada is better able to focus immigration in response to labour market needs. Reform of the points system is advantageous to skilled workers, international students and refugees in speeding up the permanent residence application process. In this context, Francophone immigration has a number of tools. The challenge is to make use of existing partnerships with community organizations and chambers of commerce in order better to meet the needs of each region. Postsecondary institutions also have an important role to play in these communities, particularly in terms of recruitment.

The experiences of local partnerships with the FMCs, particularly under the Canada-Ontario agreement, will allow CIC to create similar programs elsewhere in Canada.

The CIC Francophone Minority Communities Steering Committee is implementing the *Strategic Plan to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities* and contributing to exchanges of information and connections between the federal, provincial and local networks in immigration matters. Although skills are well distributed among federal departments, results under the agreements with the provinces are slower and more variable.

Lastly, programs such as Destination Canada are of the utmost importance in attracting immigrants to French-speaking regions in Canada. The vast potential of international students should also be put to use. To this end, care should be taken to ensure that as many international students as possible have off-campus and post-diploma work permits. These quantitative data are crucial for the federal government because they ensure accountability in measuring the success of government programs and projects, and provide benchmarks for managers. Measurement tools also reflect progress in thinking, for example the definition of who is a French-speaking immigrant.

Forum 2

2. What policy or program changes are needed to improve communities' ability to form partnerships in order to meet the constantly evolving needs of increasingly diverse clients? What role do non-governmental organizations and local partners play in the recruitment, settlement and integration of Francophone immigrants in Canada?

Michèle Vatz-Laaroussi
Université de Sherbrooke

Informal networks are most important in the process of attracting, integrating and retaining immigrants, particularly in the regions. Those networks can take various forms: they can be family, experience-based (as in the case of refugees), ethnic, religious, multi-ethnic, or neighbourhood networks. They are often transnational because of the nature of immigrants' routes to Canada, and thus have links to vast economic potential. Relying heavily on the Internet, those networks are powerful tools for attracting immigrants to Canada and then, not being tied to a single location, for promoting mobility within Canada. Also, informal networks are often more effective than formal institutional networks in attracting immigrants to the regions. Informal networks enjoy flexibility that allows them to respond to various aspects of the reality of migration routes, as well as great effectiveness in reaching individuals. They are also vital tools in receiving immigrants. First of all, they make possible an initial contact that is familiar, as well as links between the immigrant and the local community. In addition, in contributing to immigrants' economic integration, those networks are important in retaining newcomers to small communities.

The informal nature of those networks makes them leading players that complement but do not replace formal networks. While formal networks essentially provide assistance and services at various levels, informal networks offer familiar, reciprocal connections. The complementary presence of both formal and informal networks in a community is undeniably an asset for both the local and the immigrant population. In this context there is a need, not merely to fund services provided by organizations, but also to fund informal projects in which people actually become involved and which bring people together, thereby allowing newcomers to participate in municipal decision-making and civil society. Lastly, serious efforts are called for in order to make the public aware of not only diversity issues, but also the effective diversity of Canada's French-speaking communities, often perceived as being homogeneous.

Marc Arnal

University of Alberta

Francophone immigration to Canada is designed to offset a chronic structural imbalance between Canada's language communities. To this end, it is not enough to integrate French-speaking immigrants into the host community: Francophone identities must be recreated around a plurality of first languages, races, religions and cultures. This issue has to do with participation in the minority communities by Francophones whose first language is English and by Métis persons. While immigration is often presented as a solution to declining demographics, it is only one aspect of a more comprehensive task of identity that FMCs are called upon to carry out. It is important to define the role of the associations sector in this task, since it has been designated as representative of Francophone immigration in Canada.

Immigration matters are complex and extend beyond CIC's mandate. There is a need to develop a conceptual framework that will make it possible to understand and to focus action by various national stakeholders in immigration matters. This conceptual framework would allow for projects such as micro-credit for immigrants to start up businesses.

One thing the CIC Francophone Minority Communities Steering Committee seeks to do is to articulate Canadian citizenship in terms of fairness, diversity and community. The debate in Quebec on reasonable accommodation can be seen as a rebalancing of the relationship among these three factors. The end goal is not to reach a definition but to initiate a process.

Jocelyne Lalonde

Director, Consortium national de formation en santé (CNFS)

At present, the health care sector is experiencing a labour shortage. As is the case in a number of other sectors, the CNFS considers immigration to be a solution to this structural problem, particularly in FMCs.

The CNFS acts at the crossroads of training for health care professionals, access to services, and integration of health care professionals trained abroad.

Three studies conducted in recent years have identified the challenges facing health care professionals with foreign credentials. At present, very few regulatory organizations are able to assess foreign credentials in French. As well, credential recognition procedures are complicated and uneven. Lastly, the high cost of training and examinations, as well as the lack of supplementary training in French, are significant barriers for immigrants. As a result, the CNFS carries out awareness activities with health care professional associations; since health care is under provincial jurisdiction, coordinating those efforts is very difficult. In this regard, the challenges facing French-speaking and English-speaking health care professionals with foreign credentials are similar. That said, Francophones face an additional barrier: the disparity between the resources available in French and in English, particularly for supplementary training.

The CNFS offers nursing training and is working to have that training recognized by professional associations. It is also working with the University of Moncton to set up ongoing training for physicians. Three pilot projects were carried out in three regions of Canada to help health care professionals with foreign credentials obtain access to resources allowing them to have their credentials

recognized. The issue is allowing immigrants to develop fully as professionals in French-speaking communities and, in return, to allow FMCs to benefit from the full potential of immigration.

Caroline Andrew
University of Ottawa

Partnerships with municipalities and communities are an interesting addition to immigration matters. For example, the Canada-Ontario agreement explicitly refers to the role of the communities in the integration process, and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario has added immigration matters to its mandate. Those partnerships make it possible to forge clear links between the region of settlement, the entire community—including informal networks—and the municipal government, and to escape from the straightjacket of the federal government, whose areas of jurisdiction do not cover local matters that are nevertheless fundamental in the integration process and in building an identity for immigrants.

That said, municipalities in Ontario have not always been open to the challenges and issues of Francophone immigration. Most French-speaking immigrants to Ontario settle in communities that are predominantly English-speaking. Thus it is important to design bilingual strategies and to prepare immigrants for a language situation in which English will play a leading role, both occupationally and culturally.

Despite those significant challenges, Francophone immigration opens up economic opportunities for municipalities and thus offers added value to mixed communities. Surveys show that more and more people are aware of La Francophonie, and this increasingly Francophile attitude may be beneficial; that said, that attitude is slow to manifest itself in policies, and at the municipal level there is a very high level of non-participation, particularly by young persons.

New partnerships are possible between FMCs, Anglophones, and municipalities, that would allow everyone to work together toward shared goals, but forming those new partnerships takes time. Policies must take into account the actual duration of the immigration process, which extends from the medium to the long term. Briefly, the time immigration takes must be reflected by institutions.

Beyond sharing best practices, the speakers highlighted the current complexity of immigration matters. Affecting all levels of government, civil society and institutions, such as universities, often seen as necessary in urgent situations, particularly demographic trends in Canada's FMCs, immigration is a source of both hope and challenge.