

Title:

Small Places, Big Changes:
Temporary Migration, Immigration and Family Reunification

Authors:

Alison Moss, Research Affiliate, Rural Development Institute, Brandon University
Jill Bucklaschuk, Research Affiliate, Rural Development Institute, Brandon University
Robert C. Annis, Director, Rural Development Institute, Brandon University

Abstract:

This article explores the impact of migration, immigration and the process of family reunification in Brandon Manitoba. The community has recently experienced an influx of temporary migrants to fill labour shortages at an expanding pork processing plant. The case is unique because 'temporary' does not necessarily mean temporary; many temporary migrants transition into immigrants and reunite with their families.

**This paper is intended for publication in the upcoming Canadian Themes
Temporary Migration Issue.**

The impact of transnational migration is far-reaching and transformative in ways often unimaginable, varying amongst perspective and location. The experiences of Brandon, Manitoba, the province's second largest urban centre and destination for hundreds of temporary foreign workers, could not have been anticipated and has evolved with time. The city is in the midst of rapid and unprecedented change owed to temporary migration initiated by an industrial strategy to meet immediate labour needs. In a province that aggressively promotes immigration through a strong Provincial Nominee Program, the current circumstances in Brandon are considered to be unique. Despite the fact that the majority of newcomers are temporary foreign workers, 'temporary' is not always impermanent, and in many cases it means permanent. Though Brandon has already experienced a large influx of temporary foreign workers, greater, more visible changes will become increasingly evident in the near future as migrants evolve into immigrants and families reunite.

This article will explore the local experience as well as anticipated challenges and opportunities that accompany continued growth. As the number of newcomers continues to increase and diversify, service provision challenges are likely to intensify. Most notably, there will be increasing demands on the school division, health services, and housing. Currently and into the future, the need for family-appropriate dwellings will increase, causing housing shortages and further challenging the housing sector in the community. It is anticipated that the community will continue to see local business developments arising as new markets emerge. A key concern noted is the need for increased language supports since newcomers often come with limited levels of English proficiency. Currently, a number of local businesses and service providers wish to hire individuals fluent in languages other than English, particularly Spanish and Mandarin, which is unprecedented in the city.

The Province of Manitoba has set and reached high per capita immigration targets. In 2007, Manitoba welcomed nearly 11,000 immigrants, of which approximately 70% were Provincial Nominees. The *Canada-Manitoba Immigration Agreement (CIMA)* came into existence in 1996 and serves as the province's main immigration policy framework. CIMA represents one of the first agreements in the country outlining an

innovative and cooperative arrangement between the federal government and a province, granting increased autonomy and responsibility for immigration to the province (Amoyaw 2008). Since the late 1990s Manitoba has benefited from economic and social growth, often in part attributed to increased immigration. In 2007, immigration to Manitoba represented 4.6% of total immigration to Canada, and the province's 2.6% population growth is largely accredited to immigration (Government of Manitoba 2007). Most newcomers settling in Manitoba make their homes in Winnipeg, but a significant number of immigrants also settle in rural centres such as Steinbach, Brandon and Winkler.

Over the past four years, the number of temporary foreign workers migrating to Manitoba to fill labour shortages has doubled. In 2003 there were 1,426 temporary foreign worker arrivals and 2,878 in 2007. Interestingly, 45% of temporary foreign workers arriving in Manitoba went to communities other than Winnipeg (Manitoba Labour and Immigration 2008). Many of the temporary foreign workers arriving to Manitoba enter Canada with the knowledge that they may apply for permanent residency after six months of working in the province through the Provincial Nominee Program. In Manitoba, temporary foreign workers are considered a source of permanent immigration, thus contributing to the province's annual immigration targets. With this option of permanence, there is a fundamental need to reconsider how migrant workers are perceived and treated upon their arrival through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program pilot project for occupations requiring lower levels of formal training (NOC C & D).

Brandon has remained relatively homogenous over time; population growth has been steady, yet low. Today the community is rapidly diversifying and will likely continue to do so into the future as family members join immigrant spouses and relatives. Brandon's population has risen from 39,716 in 2001 to 41,511 in 2006 (Statistics Canada 2007). Historically, immigration to Brandon has been low, but in 2007 the community had the highest rate of immigration growth in Manitoba, tripling 2006 levels to 642 newcomers. Brandon has become the third destination community in Manitoba after Winnipeg and Winkler (Manitoba Labour and Immigration 2008). It is estimated that if all temporary foreign workers and their families stay in Brandon, by 2011 there will be an addition of about 5,100 residents. This addition represents approximately 12% of

Brandon's 2006 population (Bucklaschuk, Moss, and Gibson 2008). Initial estimates from Maple Leaf Foods indicate that over 90% of temporary foreign workers apply for provincial nominee status. Family reunification visibly began during the fall of 2007 and will continue as a large percentage of temporary foreign workers receive provincial nominee status.

Maple Leaf Foods has been a large driver of the recent increase of migration and immigration into Brandon to fulfill local labour needs. The Maple Leaf hog processing plant in Brandon opened in 1999 with the implementation of a full second shift in June 2008. The recent second shift expansion has made the Brandon mega plant the largest Maple Leaf facility in Canada (Maple Leaf Foods March 2008). Maple Leaf Foods staffing in Brandon occurs in three streams: domestic, international, and salaried. Efforts are made to recruit and hire employees domestically, but national recruitment strategies have been unable to fully meet the company's staff needs. International recruitment of foreign workers began in 2002 with the first group arriving from Mexico, since which time workers have been recruited from China, Colombia, El Salvador, Mauritius, and Ukraine (Rural Development Institute 2008b). Temporary foreign worker recruitment efforts have resulted in the arrival of approximately 1,000 newcomers. Of the 1,700 employees at the Brandon plant, 60% are international recruits (Boeve and Annis 2008).

Small centres and rural regions face unique challenges in retaining newcomers. Amenities and services associated with large-scale immigration and urban centres may not exist or have the capacity to serve rapidly arising diverse needs (Foster and McPherson 2007). It is therefore critical to have open, trusting and effective communication channels connecting individuals and organizations within a community. It is important that the drivers of migration, community planners, and service providers communicate to enhance awareness and understanding regarding future plans and the impact of growth. Perspective dictates how changes and needs are viewed; it is often difficult, perhaps even impossible, to fully understand the transformative nature of large scale migration without 'putting yourself in somebody else's shoes'.

Brandon has benefited from a proactive approach that encourages collaboration and communication across sectors to plan for challenges and needs. To aid the settlement process and increase communication, six Maple Leaf Foods employees have been

assigned roles as Community Steering Committee (CSC) liaisons to serve as a bridge between the company and the community. Each CSC liaison represents one of six settlement priorities: housing, education, health care, transportation, childcare, and language and support services (Rural Development Institute 2008b). Maple Leaf Foods representatives meet regularly with community planners and local service providers to work towards addressing current and future needs of newcomers and long-time community residents. The Rural Development Institute's Temporary Foreign Worker Dialogue Group brings government, community, and academia together to explore community, program, and policy needs. Both groups are illustrative of the cooperative approach emerging locally to prepare and plan for evolving needs of newcomers and community.

As previously mentioned, the permanent nature of temporary migration in Brandon is unique and attention must be focused on how to meet the needs of individuals as they evolve through migrant/immigrant categories and subsequently reunite with family. However, service providers and community planners encounter challenges related to policy and program regulations based on status and immigrant category. Recent provincial policy adjustments have enabled local immigrant service providers to increase support for temporary migrants. It is without question that changes and adjustments need to be made to regulations precluding the provision of support and services to those defined as 'temporary'; the decision to permanently remain in Brandon will be influenced by initial experiences. When there is nothing temporary about 'temporary', permanent supports need to be provided or else the community and company will be in jeopardy of getting caught in a cycle of continuous recruitment. Retention rates are directly linked to welcoming communities that have the capacity to successfully absorb newcomers and assist their integration. The interim period between when temporary foreign workers arrive and become permanent residents is a time in which community can impact newcomers' decisions to stay in the area. Community preparedness and welcome initiatives are imperative (Rural Development Institute 2008a).

Transnational families, though not a recent phenomenon (Ho 2008), are increasing as industrial and developmental strategies foster reliance on international labour pools (Landolt & Da 2005; McGuire and Martin 2007; Pottinger 2005; Suarez-

Orozco, Todorvova, and Louie 2002). Globalization, increased immigration, temporary migration, and mobility have left few states static. Migrants to Brandon are often single young men or men with dependants that are left in their country of origin. The subsequent reunification of spouses and children can be considered a second wave of migration/immigration to the community. Industrial developments in the United States during the 1990s prompted similar patterns of migration to non-traditional immigrant receiving locales. These destination communities often experience a series of stages influenced and shaped by gender (Hernandez-Leon and Zuniga 2000).

Concern regarding family separation and the presence of relatively high numbers of 'single' males has the potential to produce long-term impacts on migrant families and the community. A Manitoba study indicated that factors such as loneliness, differing cultural norms, boredom, anonymity, and an increased sense of freedom can sometimes place newcomers at risk. The same study also found that "bars" become a main source of recreation and social interaction for newcomers (Foster and McPherson 2007). There is local concern that migrants and their families may face domestic strain and possible family breakdown owed to long periods of separation. Family reunification is a goal of many temporary foreign workers as they arrive in Brandon; however, two years is a long time to be separated from one's family, and this may negatively impact family members as they relocate to Canada. In some instances, when families are reunited they no longer function as a single-family unit. In cases of family breakdown, local service providers offer assistance to spouses to ensure they are able to obtain food and shelter, apply for social assistance and child support, and seek legal aid. These issues require further attention as women and children are put at risk of poverty, social isolation, domestic violence, and possible homelessness. An increased understanding of family reunification, associated needs, and challenges is timely and necessary (Rural Development Institute 2008c).

In addition to ensuring that basic needs are met, the community is faced with positive challenges related to an increased demand for services. Historically, the Brandon School Division has experienced an annual decline in enrolment, and 2007 was the first year without a decline. There are about 7,000 students in the Brandon School Division.

Approximately 5 new students register per week, compared to the previous average of 2 per week. The school division has noted that the increase has been gradual thus far, allowing for better settlement and planning. Between May 2008 and June 2009, the Brandon School Division expects approximately 167 new English as an Additional Language (EAL) students, in addition to the 276 currently enrolled. Without immigration, enrolment from kindergarten to grade 8 would be in decline. With increasing enrolment, adequate physical space is not a concern; however, sufficient programming, resources, and personnel are of great concern (Rural Development Institute 2008c).

Immigration is increasing more rapidly than government resources. The Brandon School Division, like many local stakeholders and service providers, recognize the need to collaborate and share information to plan holistically for local growth and change. The school division works with Maple Leaf Foods to pre-register potential students enabling planning to occur based on accurate numbers from actual anticipated arrivals. Understanding differences amongst EAL learners and newcomers is needed to ensure enhanced education and a positive, effective experience. EAL students have traditionally arrived with higher levels of English language proficiency; in many instances children's parents had high levels of formal education. It is critical to understand how needs have evolved, which is, in part, due to different categories of immigrants and skill levels. Since 2005, the Brandon School Division has been in a period of adjustment and transition as more EAL students arrive with lower levels of English language proficiency. Support for EAL in secondary schools is in the greatest need, as those students have the least amount of time to complete their education in an additional language. It is vital to provide mechanisms to support EAL development in addition to integrating newcomers into the student body.

The Brandon story is unique and must be recognized as so to ensure that policy and programming effectively meet local needs and enhances the experience of newcomers and the community. The nature of the community and the ability to welcome and absorb newcomers will impact retention rates. Attraction of migrants and newcomers is well underway; however, without community planning and preparedness, Brandon could become merely a transitional destination. Family reunification is an important

contributing factor to retention and integration into the region. Multi-level partnerships and communication is vital to ensure the municipality receives needed provincial support. Successful settlement is as much about integration as it is about ensuring a welcoming community that positively reacts to newcomers and includes them in community life. A welcoming community respects diversity and exudes positive attitudes towards the arrival of newcomers who come with different languages and cultures. Anti-racism initiatives and cultural diversity celebrations are critical components of a welcoming community as well as successful settlement and integration. Families must feel included in their new community and efforts must be taken to ensure a hospitable environment. A community that welcomes newcomers and works to ensure their full participation in society will experience the benefits of population and economic growth and increased diversity.

References

- Amoyaw, B. 2008. "Manitoba Immigration Policy and Programs." *International Settlement Canada Research Resource Division for Refugees* 21.31: 6-12.
- Boeve, S. and R. Annis. 2008. "Maple Leaf Foods & the Rural Development Institute Collaborate to Better Understand the Recruitment, Settlement, Integration and Future Residency of Temporary Foreign Workers in Manitoba." Paper presented at the Conference Board of Canada, Leaders' Roundtable on Immigration, Toronto, Ontario.
- Bucklaschuk, J., Moss, A., & Gibson, R. 2008. "Temporary Migration in Rural Centres: The Case of 'Transitional' Foreign Workers in Brandon, Manitoba. Poster presented at the Canadian Rural Revitalization foundation annual conference. Inuvik, Northwest Territories, June 18-21, 2008.
- Foster, C., and McPherson, N. 2007. "Improving Access to Services for Immigrant and Refugee Communities: Needs Assessment." Final Report. Brandon University.
- Manitoba Labour and Immigration. 2008, Summer. "Manitoba Immigration Facts: 2007 Statistical Report."
http://www2.immigratemanitoba.com/asset_library/en/resources/pdf/mif07.pdf (1 Oct. 2008).
- Maple Leaf Foods. 2008. "Research Notes: Maple Leaf Orientation." Rural Development Institute, March 20, 2008.
- Hernandez-Leon, R., and Zuniga, V. 2000. "Making Carpet by the Mile: The Emergence of a Mexican Community in an Industrial Region of the U.S. Historic South." *Social Science Quarterly*, 81.1: 50-66.
- Ho, Elaine Lynn-Ee. 2008. "Flexible Citizenship" or Familial Ties That Bind? Singaporean Transmigrants in London. *International Migration* 46.4: 145-175.
- Landolt, P., and Da, W. 2005. "The Spatially Ruptured Practices of Migrant Families: A Comparison of Immigrants from El Salvador and the People's Republic of China." *Current Sociology* 53.4: 625-653.
- McGuire, S., and Martin, K. 2007. "Fractures Migrant Families: Paradoxes of Hope and Devastation." *Family & Community Health* 30.3: 178-188.
- Pottinger, A. 2005. "Children's Experience of Loss by Parental Migration in Inner-City Jamaica." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 75.4: 485-496.
- Rural Development Institute. 2008a. "An Overview of Temporary Foreign Workers in Brandon, Manitoba: Expectations, roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders – governments, communities, and employers."
http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/TFW/RDI_DiscussionPaper1.pdf
- Rural Development Institute. 2008b. "Settlement: Considerations for Temporary Foreign Workers in Brandon and Area. Discussion Paper 2."
http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/TFW/RDI_DiscussionPaper2.pdf
- Rural Development Institute. 2008c. "Settlement: Considerations for Temporary Foreign Workers in Brandon and Area. Discussion Paper 3."
http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/TFW/RDI_DiscussionPaper3.pdf
- Statistics Canada. 2007, March. "Brandon, Manitoba (table). 2006 Community Profiles. 2006 Census." Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Ottawa.
<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/profiles/community/Index.cfm?Lang=E> (8 Oct. 2008).

Suarez-Orozco, C., Todorvova, I., and Louie, J. 2002. "Making Up for Lost Time: The Experience of Separation and Reunification Among Immigrant Families. *Family Process* 41.4: 625-643.