



Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in Ashern & Arborg, Manitoba

This community report is part of the "Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in CIC's Western Region" study.



Population (2011): Ashern 609 residents

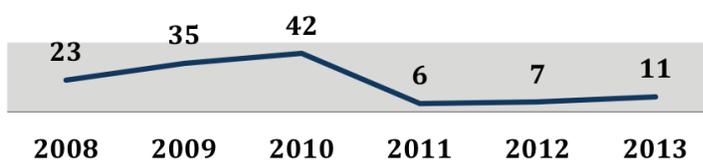
Arborg 1,152 residents

Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 Census

Permanent Resident Landings

Arborg 2008-2013

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada



UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA



BRANDON UNIVERSITY

Data sources: 2 Service Providing Organizations (SPOs) receiving funding from CIC, provincial and other sources.

• Findings validated locally

SETTLEMENT SERVICES



Top services offered

- Information and orientation, needs assessment and referral, interpretation services, language training and support.
- Assistance finding housing and job (networking and mentoring), setting up a business.
- Assistance with daily life, computer access.



Key gaps identified

- Transportation support
- Recognition of foreign credentials
- Inadequate ability to support non-Permanent residents (PR)
- Lack of administrative help (e.g., Permanent resident applications and getting drivers licenses)
- Several services need to expand



Barriers to access services

- Language difficulties of newcomers
- Transportation difficulties
- Confusion about where to get help
- Ineligibility for services
- Lack of childcare
- Hours of the day the services are offered



Top services needed

- Language training and assessment
- Computer/internet access
- Assistance with daily life
- Assistance finding housing
- Information and orientation



Services needed by newcomers ineligible for CIC funded services

Language training, computer access, information and orientation, need assessment and referral, supports from Service Canada (SIN number and child tax).

PARTNERSHIPS



- In Ashern and Arborg, both service providers sampled were working in partnership.
- The most commonly identified partnerships exist with schools/ school board, umbrella organization, SPOs, newcomers, health services, municipalities, businesses, the chamber of commerce, civil society groups, foundations, and labour market services.
 - Welcoming, settlement and integration activities were conducted in partnership, though integration activities were the least reported.



INTEGRATION IN COMMUNITY

- The perception of how easy it was for newcomers to settle in Ashern and Arborg was mixed. Housing shortage and transportation difficulties were listed as the main barriers for newcomer settlement.
- Participants agreed it was easy or somewhat easy for newcomers to get jobs in Ashern and Arborg, but usually in low skill positions. Language and foreign credential recognition are key barriers to employment.

IMMIGRATION SETTLEMENT SERVICES AND GAPS IN CIC'S WESTERN REGION: Ashern & Arborg, Manitoba

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to better understand the settlement and integration services available to newcomers and to explore the service gaps and opportunities in Ashern and Arborg, Manitoba and 28 other rural communities across Western Canada. This research offers a current snapshot of Ashern and Arborg by providing information gathered from a sample of local service providers. It is not a comprehensive review of all settlement services in Ashern and Arborg. Data were collected in October and November 2014 from 2 organizations serving newcomers in Ashern and Arborg through a telephone survey completed by a representative from each organization. Only one of the organizations received funding from the CIC. The other SPO received funding from provincial and other sources. A draft of the Ashern and Arborg community report was provided to the survey participants and three additional community stakeholders for their feedback. The two survey participants provided feedback, and this feedback was applied to the report to improve its accuracy.

Background

Ashern and Arborg are both towns in the Interlake region in central Manitoba. The Interlake is a large provincial electoral division located between Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipeg. Both have historical connections to the railways. Arborg, meaning "River town," was established in 1910 and is located 35 kilometres north of Gimli. Ashern is farther north and is in the northwest corner of the Interlake region. While the population of Arborg has grown 12.8% from 2006 (1,021) to 2011 (1,152), Ashern's population has declined 4.7% during the same time period from 639 to 609 (Statistics Canada, 2014). A large proportion (90% or above) of the residents in both towns speak English in the home and it would appear there is a fairly homogenous population in both towns.

Community Settlement Concerns

Both participants felt the number of newcomers settling in Ashern and Arborg had increased in the last 5 years. The main explanation for this growth in the newcomer population was the employment opportunities in health care (strong demand for nurses), the hog industry, and

manufacturing. The two participants had differing opinions regarding how easily newcomers could settle into the community. One participant felt newcomer settlement was somewhat difficult because the large geographic region and limited transportation made it challenging for newcomers to access services. The other participant felt newcomer settlement was somewhat easy, but specifically for newcomer nurses, since they are given an incentive packages to move to the area and, as part of the hiring process, they are connected with settlement services. An extreme housing shortage was identified (especially in Ashern) as a struggle for newcomer settlement.

Both participants agreed it was somewhat easy or easy for newcomers to get jobs, but this is the case mainly for low skill, entry-level employment. Foreign credential recognition and language were identified as the two main barriers to getting a job in Ashern and Arborg. In fact, one SPO had the impression foreign credential recognition was harder in Manitoba than in other provinces, such as Alberta.

Available Settlement Services

The two service providers from Ashern and Arborg offered a variety of settlement and integration services over large geographic areas (see Appendix A for a list of possible settlement services). The SPO in Arborg offered information and orientation, need assessment and referral, interpretation services, assistance with daily life, help with setting up a business, and occupational/business mentorship and networking. Information and orientation sessions are offered in Arborg, however attendance has dramatically declined since CIC's shift to fund only permanent residents and refugees. In Ashern, settlement services offered included literacy support, language assistance, assistance with finding a job and housing, business networking, help with daily life, and computer access. Several specific services were identified as needing to be expanded and included interpretation services, childcare, and assistance completing administrative tasks (e.g., permanent resident application and getting drivers licenses). The top services identified by participants as needed by newcomers were language training and assessment, assistance with daily life, access to Service Canada, information and orientation, computer access, and assistance finding housing, which can be scarce.

In regards to newcomers who are ineligible for CIC-funded services, participants indicated temporary foreign workers (TFW), new and returning naturalized citizens, refugee claimants and international students were all in need of settlement services; however, less emphasis was placed on the needs of international students. This is perhaps due to the fact that Ashern and Arborg may see few international students, since there are no universities or colleges in the region. Similar to the needs identified for CIC eligible newcomers, language training, computer access, information and orientation, need assessment and referral, and supports from Service Canada were all listed as the services most needed by newcomers who are ineligible for services. All of these services are currently offered in the region, but eligibility is an issue and may restrict newcomer access to these services. Both participants felt strongly the services being funded should be offered to all newcomers (e.g., TFW). Currently the SPOs only option is to provide ineligible newcomers with the CIC website, though more hands on support is often needed and necessary.

Several barriers to accessing services were identified by participants. The large geographic region combined with the lack of public transportation makes it hard for newcomers to access services. In addition, ineligibility for services, lack of childcare, confusion about where to get help, hours of the day the services are offered, and lack of services were also identified as key barriers.

Tracking and Planning

One of the two service providers reported their organization regularly assessed the need of newcomers in their community. These assessments were conducted monthly internally, yearly externally, by collaborating and discussing with a committee comprised of a variety of stakeholders.

Specific Capacities

In Ashern and Arborg, the two organizations who participated in the survey had differing organizational capacity. Both organizations felt they had adequate financial support from government sources, but Arborg did not feel they had enough financial support from other sources. Neither organization felt they had the capacity to provide services in both official languages. Overall the Arborg service provider had more concerns about having the capacity to provide services to newcomers and cited insufficient capacity to mobilize the community to volunteer and welcome newcomers, staff skills to deliver and maintain services. The large geographic region serviced by these SPOs can, in itself, strain available staff resources. In addition, in an effort to keep staff up to speed and ease service delivery, it would be beneficial to have a central provincial

organizational body which could provide support to SPOs by answering questions, providing training, and clarifying changing policies and regulations. The remaining items on the list (see Appendix C) both participants felt they had adequate capacity in the following areas: staff to provide services, government funding, ability to communicate with stakeholders, coordinate services with other SPOs, create governing and strategic plans, and meet reporting requirements.

Partnerships

Both of the participants from Ashern and Arborg were engaged in partnerships within the community (see Appendix B for list of possible partnerships). The participants identified partnerships with the schools/school board, umbrella organization, SPOs, newcomers, health services, municipalities, businesses, the chamber of commerce, civil society groups, foundations, labour market services and Service Canada. However, more communication is necessary with the Chambers of Commerce to ensure they are fully aware of settlement services being offered in the region, but initiating this communication would tax SPO's already strained manpower.

The activities conducted in partnership were categorized into three groups; settlement (e.g., getting jobs and housing, daily functioning), integration (e.g., teaching labour rules and human rights), and welcoming (e.g., orientation to community, civic events). Welcoming, settlement, and integration activities were conducted in partnership, though integration activities were the least reported. Resources in these organizations are reportedly strained and, despite the partnerships are established, it can be a challenge to find the additional time to specifically focus on issues related to newcomers.

Research Team

Bill Ashton, Ph.D. (*Principal Investigator*)
Rachael Pettigrew, Ph.D. (*Research Associate*)
Eleni Galatsanou, MSc (*Project Coordinator*)

Rural Development Institute, Brandon University
Tel: 204-571-8513, Ashtonw@brandonu.ca

Lori Wilkinson, Ph.D. (*Chair of Project Advisory Panel*)

University of Manitoba
Tel: 204- 474-8491, Lori.Wilkinson@umanitoba.ca

Appendix A – List of Possible Services

SETTLEMENT

- a. Greeting upon arrival/initial reception
- b. Information and orientation
- c. Needs assessment and referral
- d. Interpretation services
- e. Language assessment
- f. Language training
- g. Help finding housing
- h. Help with daily life (e.g., registering for school, getting a bank account)
- i. Transportation support

ECONOMIC

- j. Help finding a job
- k. Educational upgrading
- l. Recognition of foreign credentials
- m. Investment opportunities
- n. Job-specific language training
- o. Help setting up a business
- p. Occupational/business mentorship and networking
- q. Financial supports

SOCIAL

- r. Childcare
- s. Cultural Events
- t. Recreational services
- u. Legal support/referral
- v. Health Services
- w. Mental Health Services
- x. Social inclusion/ integration support
- y. Services for seniors
- z. Services for women
- aa. Services for youth

Appendix B – Possible Organizational Partnerships

- School/School Boards
- Umbrella organizations
- Newcomers (individuals)
- Housing services
- Settlement service providers
- Health services
- Municipal offices/ EDO
- Civil society groups
- Francophone organizations
- Language training providers
- Children/Family services
- Businesses
- Chambers of Commerce
- Police Force
- Universities/Research Networks
- Ethno-cultural groups
- Religious organizations
- Public libraries
- Foundations

Appendix C – Possible Organizational Capacities

- Staff to provide services
- Financial support from government sources to maintain current services
- Financial support from non-government sources to maintain current services
- Communication with stakeholders
- Coordinating services with other service providers
- Staff skills for delivery and maintenance of services
- Mobilization of community to support and welcome newcomers
- Creation of governing and strategic plan
- Meet reporting requirements
- Provide services in both official languages
- Creation of governing and strategic plan
- Meet reporting requirements
- Provide services in both official languages