



Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in Brandon, Manitoba

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

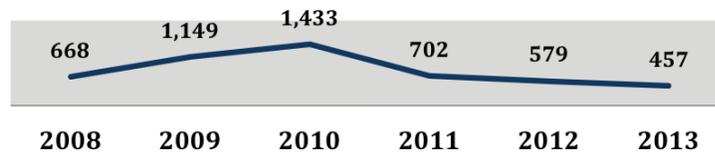


Population (2011): 46,061 in the downtown core and 53,229 including the surroundings

Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 Census

Permanent Resident Landings Brandon 2008-2013

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada



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Data sources: 4 Service Providing Organizations (SPOs) receiving funding from CIC, provincial, NGO and private sources.

- Findings validated locally

SETTLEMENT SERVICES



Top services offered

- Language training
- Information and orientation
- Transportation
- Cultural events
- Services for youth and women
- Assistance finding housing



Key gaps identified

- Foreign credential recognition
- Investment opportunities
- Occupational/business mentorship
- Services for seniors
- Lack of financial education sessions
- Childcare needs to expand



Barriers to access services

- Ineligibility for services
- Language difficulties of newcomers
- Lack of child care
- Transportation difficulties



Top services needed

- Language training
- Foreign credential recognition
- Assistance finding a job
- Assistance finding housing
- Occupational mentorship



Services needed by newcomers ineligible for CIC funded services

- Information and orientation
- Language training
- Transportation
- Childcare
- Mental health services

PARTNERSHIPS



Brandon service providers are partnering with others to deliver services to newcomers.

The most commonly identified partnerships exist with schools/school boards, other service providers, language training providers, universities/research organizations and newcomers. A partnership with Chambers of Commerce is desired.

Integration activities were reportedly conducted in partnership for all 4 participants.

INTEGRATION IN COMMUNITY



- Perception: It is "somewhat difficult" for newcomers to settle in Brandon, but "somewhat easy" for them to find work, though usually low skill work.
- Acceptance by locals, housing, and language difficulties were identified as the main barrier for newcomers to settle successfully in Brandon.
- Foreign credential recognition and language skills are primarily cited as the key barriers to newcomer employment acquisition.

IMMIGRATION SETTLEMENT SERVICES AND GAPS IN CIC'S WESTERN REGION: Brandon, 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 Brandon, Manitoba and 28 other rural communities across Western Canada. This research offers a current snapshot of Brandon by providing information gathered from a sample of local service providers. It is not a comprehensive review of all settlement services in Brandon. Data was collected in October and November 2014 from 4 organizations that serve newcomers in Brandon. A telephone survey was conducted with a representative from each participating organization and lasted between 20-45 minutes. Three of the four organizations received funding from the CIC, in addition to a variety of other funding sources. A draft of the community report was distributed to participants for review and a feedback session was held in early December 2014 to ensure the report accurately represented the community. In addition to those service providers who participated in the survey, feedback on the report draft was solicited from 4 additional community stakeholders that provide support to newcomers in Brandon. In total, feedback was received from 6 organizations and this feedback was applied to the current report.

Background

Brandon is the second largest city in Manitoba, following Winnipeg, and is located in the southwestern corner of the province. The city of Brandon has 53,229 residents in the metro area, but the broader Westman region boasts between 70,000 to 150,000 residents. Established by the proximity to the Assiniboine River and CP Rail line, Brandon's primary industry today is agriculture and related industries, such as fertilizer and hog production. Nine percent of Brandon's population represents newcomers that arrived between 2001 and 2009. The largest proportion of newcomers are from Central America and are employed by the local hog industry.

Community Settlement Concerns

All the service provider representatives felt that the number of newcomers settling in Brandon had increased and contributed to an 11% growth in the city's population between 2006 – 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2014). This

growth can be attributed to the employment of Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW) employed by the local hog industry and to the success of the Provincial Nominee Program. The majority of the participants felt that it is somewhat difficult for newcomers to settle into the community. The main reasons for this were acceptance by locals, availability of housing, and language difficulties. However, participants felt that it was somewhat easy for newcomers to get jobs, but this is the case mainly for low skill positions. Other than the local meat plant, high skilled newcomers find it hard to find employment that matches their experience and often are under employed out of necessity (e.g., cleaning and service positions). Foreign credential recognition and language skills are primarily cited as the key barriers to newcomer employment acquisition. In addition, newcomers seeking specific educational upgrading often have to travel to Winnipeg for several days per week to upgrade their education.

Other barriers to employment identified were transportation and availability of childcare.

Available Settlement Services

Brandon has a well-developed settlement and integration service sector with almost all services listed (26 key services – see appendix A) being offered by the participant organizations or another organization in the community. These services are offered by settlement service providers funded by the CIC, but also a variety of other organizations (e.g., faith groups, schools, health care providers, and businesses). For example, local employers work in collaboration with settlement services and regularly refer their newcomer employees to the local SPOs for assistance. The four services not offered by participants or another SPO in the community were recognition of foreign credentials, investment opportunities, occupational/business mentorship, and services specifically for seniors. It was suggested that any future settlement service development should start by maximizing the strong settlement service network already in place by enhancing existing services. Most services listed were identified as needing to be expanded, with childcare and social inclusion/integrations services being the most commonly reported. The top services that were identified by participants as needed by newcomers were language training and supports, assistance finding housing and jobs, occupational/business mentoring,

foreign credential recognition and childcare. In addition, newcomers often need assistance with government applications, such as citizenship applications.

In regards to newcomers who are ineligible for CIC-funded services, participants almost unanimously indicated that TFW, new and returning naturalized citizens, refugee claimants and international students were all in need of all the settlement services. It was felt that these newcomers often fall through the cracks and are also in need of funded support. Participants indicated that the most needed services for those who are currently ineligible for CIC-funded services were: information and orientation, language training, housing, transportation (despite public transit's recent expansion), access to childcare, assistance with daily life, and mental health services. Also, newcomers who are ineligible for CIC funded services often require assistance with permanent residence applications, which are time consuming and continually changing. Another challenge identified for ineligible newcomers was the limited access of new citizens have to upgrade their English, as they do not have access to CIC funded services and often have to pay for classes themselves. Finally, it was also suggested that both financial education and additional housing information would be highly beneficial for all newcomers (eligible and ineligible), since many newcomers do not understand the laws, their rights, and the financial regulations in Canada. A partnership with financial institutions to support such an initiative was mentioned by one of the participants.

Several barriers to accessing services were identified by participants. In Brandon, key barriers were ineligibility for services, language difficulties, lack of childcare, and transportation. Some needed services, like foreign credential recognition, are not performed in Brandon and, on occasion those seeking opportunities for educational upgrading may have to travel to Winnipeg to do so. This can be hard on families and certainly is a deterrent for newcomers who want to upgrade their skills. Other services that are not offered in Brandon are investment opportunities, occupational/business mentorship and networking and services for seniors.

Tracking and Planning

Three of the four participant service providers reported that their organization was guided by a strategic plan and that they regularly, either independently or in partnership, assessed the service needs of the newcomers in their community. These needs assessments took a variety of forms (i.e., survey, appointment tracking, internal and external reviews, verbal feedback) and were conducted monthly or quarterly.

Specific Capacities

In Brandon, the organizations that participated in the survey had strong organizational capacity with all capacities listed in Appendix C cited by the participants. All organizations felt they had adequate capacity to communicate with stakeholders, to meet reporting requirements, and coordinate services with other stakeholders. However, 3 organizations identified that they did not have adequate capacity to provide services in both official languages or for creating governing and strategic plans. More capacity in all categories will be needed in the future to meet client needs and the following capacities were cited most often as requiring growth in the future to meet the demand of projected newcomer needs: provincial funding, staff skills for service delivery, more staff for meeting reporting requirements, mobilization of the community, governance and planning, and coordinating services with other SPOs. For example, one organization felt that, despite meeting the needs of newcomers, they did not have enough capacity to take time away from providing services to proactively plan for the future. In addition, having CIC training or information sessions in Brandon would be beneficial to SPOs for staff skill and knowledge improvement. A local session would ensure the focus would be on the needs of the rural Brandon region and will also eliminate the cost and inconvenience of travel to Winnipeg.

Partnerships

All service provider participants reported being engaged in partnership with other community organizations and it is evident that Brandon has a very well developed service provider partnership network. Participants indicated that they were in partnership with 18 of the 21 possible community partners listed in the survey (see appendix B). None of the participants reported partnerships with francophone organizations and the chamber of commerce, however partnership with the latter was desired. The most commonly reported partners were schools/school boards, other service providers, language training providers, universities/research organizations and newcomers.

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). Integration activities were reportedly conducted in partnership for all 4 participants. Welcoming and settlement activities were also conducted in partnership, but not as often. Given the level of partnering and number of partnerships that currently exists in Brandon, this community would be a candidate for a Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) and there was support for this suggestion.

Research Team

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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