

A document from January 2001 at a time when the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program was established but quotas were small and the outcomes were still unpredictable. This document speaks to the underlying issues that will lead to success and larger numbers – and suggests strategies that might be used to help assure that success.

CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS OF IMMIGRATION POLICY

The Province of Manitoba is in the process of developing a new Immigration Policy designed to greatly increase the number of immigrants who arrive and settle within the Province. The primary purpose is economic in that there is a belief that the Province requires a growing population to remain economically healthy and to enhance its prospects for future growth. Foundational to this policy is the understanding that Manitoba is unlikely to significantly alter its population exchange relationship with the rest of Canada where the province can at best hold its own. Secondly, there is an assumption that the United States will remain a target for emigration from Manitoba. Third, there is a growing understanding that the current national immigration policy is designed and administered in a manner that will not result in a larger flow of immigrants to Manitoba. The conclusion flowing from these understandings is that immigration policy must be designed in a manner that deals in an exclusive and particular manner with the question of attracting and retaining immigrants to the Province.

The question of whether immigration is essential or positive for economic health and growth will not be dealt with exhaustively in this analysis with one exception. Immigration and emigration are not statistically neutral events. Individuals arrive and depart for very personal and different reasons. The limited size of the Manitoba economy and the minimal career opportunities in a slow-growth environment encourage the emigration of the best and the brightest and often the young. Immigration is also not neutral in that Manitoba receives a disproportionate share of the Canadian refugee intake in part because Winnipeg is more tolerant of minorities and in part because we are simply desperate to accept anyone who will come. Given the current global situation, refugees today do not tend to arrive from countries with well-developed educational or industrial infrastructures. As a result we may be holding our own numerically but not necessarily qualitatively in terms of the flow of people. The purpose of this comment is to suggest that immigration policy is not simply a matter of numbers. The nature of the immigrant flow will have an important impact on the future economic and social development of the Province and will also impact the nature and degree of continuing support for or against any new immigration policy. This paper will consider the issues that may be important in developing a framework and a vocabulary for the creation of such a policy.

The analysis will also assume that any Manitoba-specific immigration policy is essentially selfish from the perspective of the current population and that this is an acceptable position. Manitoba is too small and the global, national and local issues are much too complex to attempt to solve an array of political, economic and justice problems within the confines of such a policy. On the other hand, a locally-designed and administered policy may have the advantage of permitting interpretations and exceptions that may be difficult on the national scene but can be made to work locally. Such exceptions may in fact qualify as being more humane or just but the point being made is that the policy should not attempt to solve these macro problems through its purpose or design.

A recently published book (2000) by Samuel Huntington and Lawrence Harrison entitled “CULTURE MATTERS” provides some useful insights into the relationship between culture and economic development. The book is based on the contributions to a Conference at Harvard University following the controversy raised by the publication of “THE CLASH OF

CIVILIZATIONS” by Huntington. Although the contributors come from many societies, the predominant view is consistent with North American perspectives on economic development, values and the world. This is not an inappropriate perspective since the majority of Manitobans would share this view of the world. It would be helpful if those persons seriously involved in the formation of immigration policy in Manitoba would read this book to gain an understanding of the choices available to us and the implications of the presence or absence of an articulated policy.

The thesis that will be developed in this paper is that there is a necessity and an opportunity to develop an immigration policy that is explicit in terms of desired outcomes. This suggests that some types of individuals, some source countries, some sets of skills, certain family circumstances, economic circumstances, cultural baggage and a variety of administrative and other conditions will all impact the relative success or failure of any new policy. The current Canadian policy is highly selective but also capricious in terms of its results so that the idea of creating our own selection policies and priorities is not novel. Any new provincial rules should not be designed to in any way cancel or alter the national program but to add a second “immigration window” that will work different and better for Manitoba. The discussion also is based on the premise that all parties agree that tinkering with the national program will not significantly alter the current unacceptable outcome for our Province.

The Canadian immigration program (other than family reunification and refugees) and the Manitoba “Provincial Nominee” program share one very important feature in that they are both designed to deal with the immediate appropriateness of the candidate in the form of a guaranteed job or a superb personal profile including wealth. There are indeed circumstances where very particular personal profiles will match a job requirement. These tend to be unusually skilled people who probably have several other choices of destination and may easily relocate after arrival. Preferred access through the Provincial Nominee program is helpful but is much less than is required to attract and retain 10,000 immigrants per year.

A second and more difficult aspect of immigration policy is that there is a question of “political correctness” that may not be openly discussed at the risk of being accused of being racist. Nevertheless, Canadian policy is indeed racist to some degree and Canadian attitudes to immigration are probably racist to a greater degree. The argument for more or less immigration in a community is usually based on the presumed presence or absence of employment opportunities. This is indeed relevant but many studies demonstrate that immigrants who participate actively in the economy on arrival actually create more jobs than they fill since they create an immediate requirement for assets such as housing, transportation and education for their children. The “economic argument” is usually a substitute for another issue such as the belief that the nature of the immigrant flow is altering the social character of the community and impacting the education system adversely. Canada has an official annual immigration target of 300,000 persons but manages to admit only 175,000 per year. This is accomplished by maintaining regulations that are highly discouraging and by understaffing immigration offices abroad. This paper will suggest that by pretending to be politically correct we will fall into the same trap as the national program and either not achieve our objectives or fail to gain or maintain public support of any new provincial policy both within and without the province. On the other hand, any policy must meet objective tests of fairness in order to succeed.

The Canadian policy of “points”, the provincial nominee policy with an alternate structure and the thesis in the book “Culture Matters” all suggest that everyone believes that one can understand something about the nature of the person that will have an impact on their successful integration in a new society. We need to develop our own framework that takes into account as

much useful information as possible. The Provincial Nominee Program is a useful beginning but tends to carry too many of the limitations of the national policy. By enriching the considerations that go into the Provincial policy and by amending certain administrative procedures it may be possible to create an effective policy framework. A useful starting point is an understanding of the factors that will lead to a successful selection process. A prior step would be to look at the particular economic and geographic realities of Manitoba and how these may impact on a policy. The assumption is that many desirable candidates will have alternate choices and we need to understand which candidates may be successfully attracted here. Secondly, our situation may suggest that certain types of candidates would be appropriate for Manitoba to a greater degree than may be useful elsewhere.

ECONOMIC AND GEOGRAPHIC FACTORS RELEVANT TO MANITOBA

1. Geography and climate will seldom give Manitoba an advantage.
2. The FTA and NAFTA create an economic framework that is known and not debatable.
3. Current economic theory suggests that the older natural resource-based industries and to some degree manufacturing are less desirable in terms of wealth creation than knowledge-based industries. Given the realities of the Manitoba economy and our geography Manitoba will remain reliant on these sectors for some time but should actively encourage the development of the knowledge-based sectors.
4. Michael Porter suggests in his analysis that productivity is the single characteristic that determines the wealth-creation potential of a society or firm. We should affirm this reality and factor this into the selection process.
5. Manitoba has the potential to offer low-cost but high-quality living opportunities to families. This characteristic should be preserved and promoted.
6. Current economic theory suggests that the microenvironment is the essential factor that determines opportunity and success for a firm. Manitoba cannot change the national, continental or global environment but given globalization and a rules-based environment, Manitoba has the opportunity to create the local conditions for success.
7. The quality, education level, availability, flexibility, work ethic etc of the population will increasingly be a factor in local prosperity.
8. Economic theory indicates that meaningful success is defined at the level of the firm. Our policies need to be relevant at that level.
9. Business clusters are widely considered to be important to the prosperity of a region. Immigration policy should recognize the role of clusters and create policies that support the cluster rather than the more rigid requirements of a particular firm. Manitoba has a number of such clusters and more can be encouraged.

ELEMENTS OF A SELECTION PROCESS

GOALS:

1. Total annual immigration of 10,000 persons per year
2. A high and specified level of retention. The definition of retention should be defined (for example – remaining in Manitoba for three or more years) and the level of retention should be defined in cooperation with the Federal Government (eg. 80%).
3. An immigration intake that does not rely on public support in the initial years.
4. An immigration flow that does not create a level of social disruption such that the political environment becomes negative toward the ongoing program.

SELECTION CRITERIA THAT COULD BE CONSIDERED

1. An overall definition of “likely to succeed” as the most important factor in addition to any immediate criteria.
2. Specific guaranteed employment should be a decisive factor. Lists of preferred skills and jobs should be avoided except where there are restrictions based on professional requirements and acceptance.
3. Community compatibility will be critical in terms of employment, financial support and retention. Communities (ethnic, geographic or national) should be objectively evaluated in terms of their demonstrated record of inclusion, support and ability to retain immigrants in Manitoba.
4. Family units may frequently be a strong basis to attract and retain immigrants. The ability to provide support is highly relevant and requires evaluation. Where an employer will assume the income risk this should be considered positively.
5. Stable family units may be discovered to be preferable since the chance of retention may be greater.
6. The perception by “communities” that the program works for them will enhance the acceptance of the total program. Broadly defined, the program outcome should to some degree reflect the existing character of the community. Some communities will have the opportunity and interest in immigration and the program can be designed to reflect those interests.

PROGRAMMATIC PREFERENCES

This is based on the assumption that an understanding of our geography and economics plus an appraisal of our existing business and ethnic communities can permit a strategy that allows for some specific targeting. The book “Culture Matters” suggests that culture has contributed to the social and economic outcome of many societies. On the other hand, several authors argue persuasively that an individual tends to take on the character of the culture in which they live. The truth is undoubtedly somewhere in between. Consider the pattern of success or behaviour of groups such as emigrant Chinese, Mormons, people of Jewish origin, East Indians or Lebanese. Within religious communities such as Islam there are minorities like the Ismailis who are demonstrably different in terms of economic achievement and community patterns. These differences usually travel with these communities and individuals. This suggests that it may make an important difference to Manitoba who arrives and remains. **IF THIS IS ACCEPTED AS TRUE, THIS HAS IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS AND POLICIES.**

1. **FOLLOW THE COMMUNITY** – The program needs to begin with the premise that not all communities are created equal. Community “points” should be based on objective evaluation of the record of any Manitoba community (geographic, ethnic, racial, national or religious) in terms of its demonstrated ability to receive, support and retain immigrants in terms of the criteria already stated. (No community need be excluded – but the value of their support may be calibrated differently).
2. **TARGET COMMUNITIES/GROUPS ABROAD BASED ON ANALYSIS** – If we accept that there is a difference in the character of a group or nation in terms of their ability to succeed and integrate in our society we should use that knowledge. To preserve a sense of fairness we can and should select several targets that demonstrate fairness but still attain our “selfish” objectives. For example, for reasons unknown to me the people of El Salvador have a reputation for “quality” among Central Americans that should make them ideal immigrants

relative to some other nearby countries. Emigrants of El Salvador are also noted to be unusually successful in business in the United States. Bosnian and other Balkan refugees located in Western Europe are also of interest since these countries had a very well-trained technical population and the more urban and educated tended to be the people who crossed the borders and chose to remain outside. This means a significant selection process has already taken place and they have already adjusted to the problem of relocation. The Filipino community has demonstrated an excellent track record of adaptability in Winnipeg and the ability to retain its members in the Province. The Mennonite community is relatively unique in that many of its members will settle in communities outside of Winnipeg.

In contrast, some groups tend not to find Winnipeg/Manitoba as hospitable. The Chinese from Hong Kong, Peruvians, Vietnamese and others tend not to remain in Winnipeg. This kind of selection process need not be understood as discriminatory since the very nature of the Federal Program is based on discrimination. We simply need to discriminate in a manner that creates outcomes that work for our Province and our communities. If immigrants bring skills, enrich their ethnic as well as the larger communities, work productively, contribute their entrepreneurial skills, participate in the social life of the country – the program will be supported and continued. A successful program may also be enhanced to accomplish other humanitarian and social goals – but only after it demonstrates enough success to survive.

3. SELECT CANADIAN EMBASSY POSTS THAT WILL BE SUPPORTIVE

Not all embassies are created equal. In fact, the majority of Canadian Embassies do not provide immigration services. Several of those that do provide services are overloaded by virtue of the demand from those regions, the difficulties of processing files in some countries or the lack of immigration staff. A Manitoba program may not be welcomed equally in all embassies and the availability and ability of an embassy to support a new program should be taken into account. For example, a candidate from the Baltics would be serviced by London. If the candidate is required to visit London, they will require a difficult-to-obtain visa for the UK plus the expense of travel. In contrast, a Bosnian living in Germany could take a train to Berlin to be serviced by an embassy that has an objective to send 5000 Bosnians per year to Canada but has difficulty finding candidates. They are therefore motivated to be helpful. This is one example among many but does point out the potential to reduce the processing problems by selecting compatible immigrant targets and processing centers.

4. REWARD IMMIGRATION AGENTS FOR OUTCOMES

Immigration agents work in the interests of their clients and this is appropriate. However, they will be the first to use any new system to support its intended purpose or to subvert it. For example, there will be a very real temptation to use the program to bypass the more difficult federal program to admit immigrants who really intend to live elsewhere. Possibly such agents should be asked to post a bond that guarantees behaviour such as remaining in Manitoba. Since they will already have a legal/financial relationship with the client they would be capable of providing this assurance. Limited slippage could be allowed. Other goals could be set where adherence to those goals permits greater or less access to the program for those agents.

5. DEVELOP INCENTIVES TO REMAIN IN MANITOBA

There is a very real economic benefit to Manitoba if they receive adult immigrants who immediately enter the workforce. Incentives could be established to reward the desired

outcomes and possibly some fees that deter undesired actions such as relocation within a specified period of time.

Summary

There is plenty of evidence that an intelligent selection and target program is possible without undue sense of inappropriate preference. The long term success of any immigration program –whether Provincial or National will depend on its demonstrated success in bringing new citizens who are individually successful and are seen to contribute to a better community.