

MIGRATION POLICY: The Role of the Private Sector

Presented by:

Art DeFehr

October 20, 2011

Mexico City



MIGRATION POLICY: THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Art DeFehr

Mexico City, October 20, 2011

Thank you for linking the words Migration and Peace. The blending of peoples on a global scale frequently results in tension and migration occurs because there is an absence of Peace - whether political, social or economic.

I was raised in the tradition of the Historic Peace Churches. The unwillingness to participate in the wars of others forced my ancestors to become migrants and many times refugees as they moved from country to country and continent to continent for 500 years. My father even spent part of his youth in Mexico. The family lived as refugees in Ensenada Mexico in the early 1920's. My father attended local schools and survived on the streets shining shoes. I owe a debt of gratitude to Mexico for creating space for their survival.

This part of the program speaks to the role of the private sector in the process of migration. Speakers usually deals with the need for skills or the provision of business services. I will use an example from Canada to demonstrate that the Business Community can act from the perspective of its own interests but simultaneously speak constructively to more global policy issues.

Canada has a successful and relatively enlightened immigration policy from a global perspective – mainly because the policies of most other countries are so much worse. My Province, the Province of Manitoba, is geographically isolated with a small population, cold climate and no distinguishing features that make it a natural destination for migrants. 15 years ago we faced a declining population and the risk of being marginalized in a dynamic world. The Canadian immigration program did not work for us. The leaders of the business community realized that we needed population growth to provide a market for our business, skilled employees for our enterprises and economic growth to make the community dynamic and attractive.

We created or rather invented a new immigration program and persuaded the Government of Canada to cooperate with us. It has been an outstanding success. Most Provinces of Canada have copied this program and it is becoming a model for creative and enlightened immigration. I realize that every situation is different and radically different – but this example demonstrates that an intelligent approach to the movement of people can result in success for the migrant, the host community and the political authorities. The purpose of the example is to demonstrate that business leadership can play a critical role in shaping migration policy based. A few charts will illustrate the situation we faced and results.

Chart A

This chart shows immigration as a proportion of the Canadian population and as a proportion of the Manitoba population. After the mid-eighties there was a shift in the nature of the Canadian program and this resulted in the failure of Manitoba to attract immigrants. The vertical line in 1999 represents the beginning of our new program.

Chart B

This is the same chart continued through 2010 and the results for 2011 are even more favourable. Immigration into Canada remained stable but immigration into Manitoba increased by over 500%.

Chart C

The red line represents immigrant arrivals into Manitoba through the program of the Canadian Government. The blue line represents immigrant arrivals from the Provincial program. The chart speaks for itself.

Chart D

The straight line is the average immigration into Canada as a percentage of our population. The blue line is immigration into Manitoba relative to its population and again the results speak for themselves.

Chart E

An important chart. One of the criticisms of immigration in many countries and typically in the United States is that immigrants take the jobs of locals. We believed that if you allow immigrants to come as families with the ability to become citizens and settle permanently – they would then invest in homes and cars, their children attend school, they pay taxes and use the local services. Evidence suggests that the settlement of an immigrant family actually creates more jobs than they fill. After 5 years the immigrants had a higher rate of home ownership than the Canadian population.

Chart F

I will focus on the Manitoba program to make a point but will add one other chart to demonstrate a larger truth about migration policy. Note that Canada accepts immigrants at more than double the rate of the US relative to population. We share similar

situations in terms of developed and open economies with geographic space. The US really needs an immigration rate closer to that of Canada to balance the various flows of people that include real refugees, family reunion, students, skilled workers and so forth. An immigration flow that is inadequate contributes to the undocumented flow which makes up the difference and results in the toxic atmosphere surrounding immigration.

Chart G

This chart connects immigration and citizenship. The number indicates the proportion of people born outside of the country who have become citizens. It is our view that citizenship allows the immigrant to feel part of the host society and is an essential aspect of successful integration and participation. There is a very strong correlation between successful immigration and citizenship.

What role did the private sector - in this case the business community - play in the success of this program?

1. Played an important role in program Design
2. Kept the program non-partisan
3. Active in identifying skills and providing jobs
4. Provided political cover for the Government by neutralizing all of the groups that might have opposed the program
5. Managed behind the scenes to focus on immigrant flows or source countries that had greater chance of success
6. Took care to assure that the outcome would be balanced in terms of ethnic, religious or national considerations that could lead to tension or criticism in a Canadian environment that is sensitive to perceived fairness.
7. The business community has promoted the program, assisted in negotiations and remained very engaged and active to keep the program on track.

How does any of this relate to the word 'Peace'?

The UN has reported that 3% of the population of the world is resident in a country other than the country of birth. That seems like a small percentage and represents 200 million people. Amazingly, that percentage was 3% 100 years ago. This suggests there is a continuity to this question and within that 3% there are many different reasons for movement. Some are difficult and controversial and others pass without problem or notice. It seems that the world should be able to manage a flow of people that represents only 3% of our global total!

This relatively small flow of people plays a disproportionate role in shaping our world. They represent the movement of talent, the exchange of cultural forms and norms, the ability and opportunity to share language and diet. They also carry ideas, they make our cities and countries more diverse and sometimes we find that the differences challenge our comfort zone.

The private sector and specifically business can play an important role by embracing migration as a phenomenon that will happen whether we manage it or not. Business does not like uncertainty so it is in our interest to bring certainty and logic to a phenomenon that can be life-giving and energizing to both the host country and the individual migrant – or it can be disruptive for society and a disaster for the individual.

The example of one program does not pretend to be representative of other situations. However, the involvement of a small group of people from the private sector in Manitoba radically altered the nature of the dialogue, presented new ideas and provided or contributed to the political and intellectual leadership that changed the size, character and impact of migration. The private sector enjoys freedom of ideas and action that may not be true for the other participants within the political environment. We can do more than provide jobs and move money – we can contribute to the policy questions in the critical area of migration. If migration is done well – it results in the conditions for society and the individual that we describe with the word PEACE.

CHART A

Canada/Manitoba Immigration as a % of Population to 1999

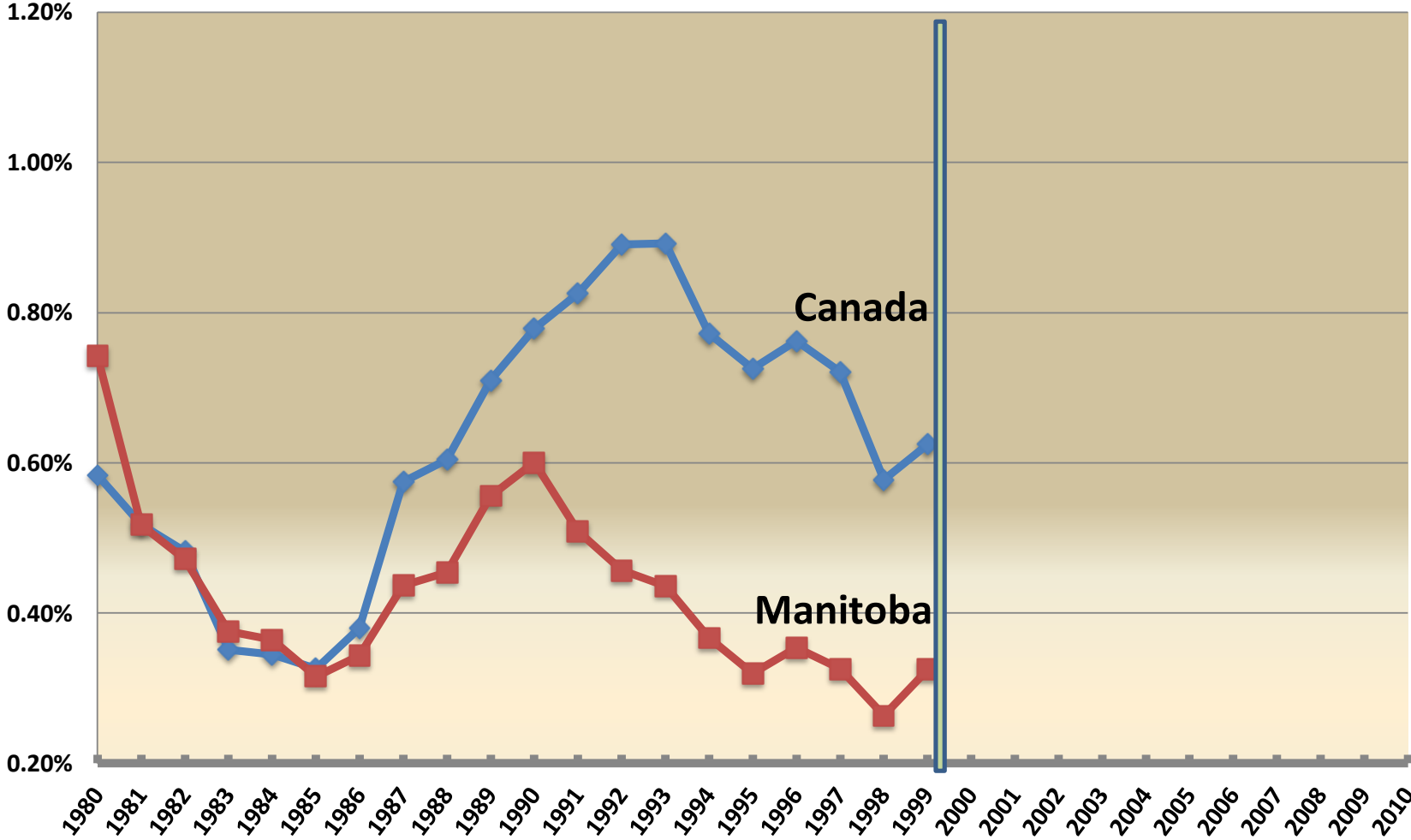


CHART B

Canada/Manitoba Immigration as a % of Population

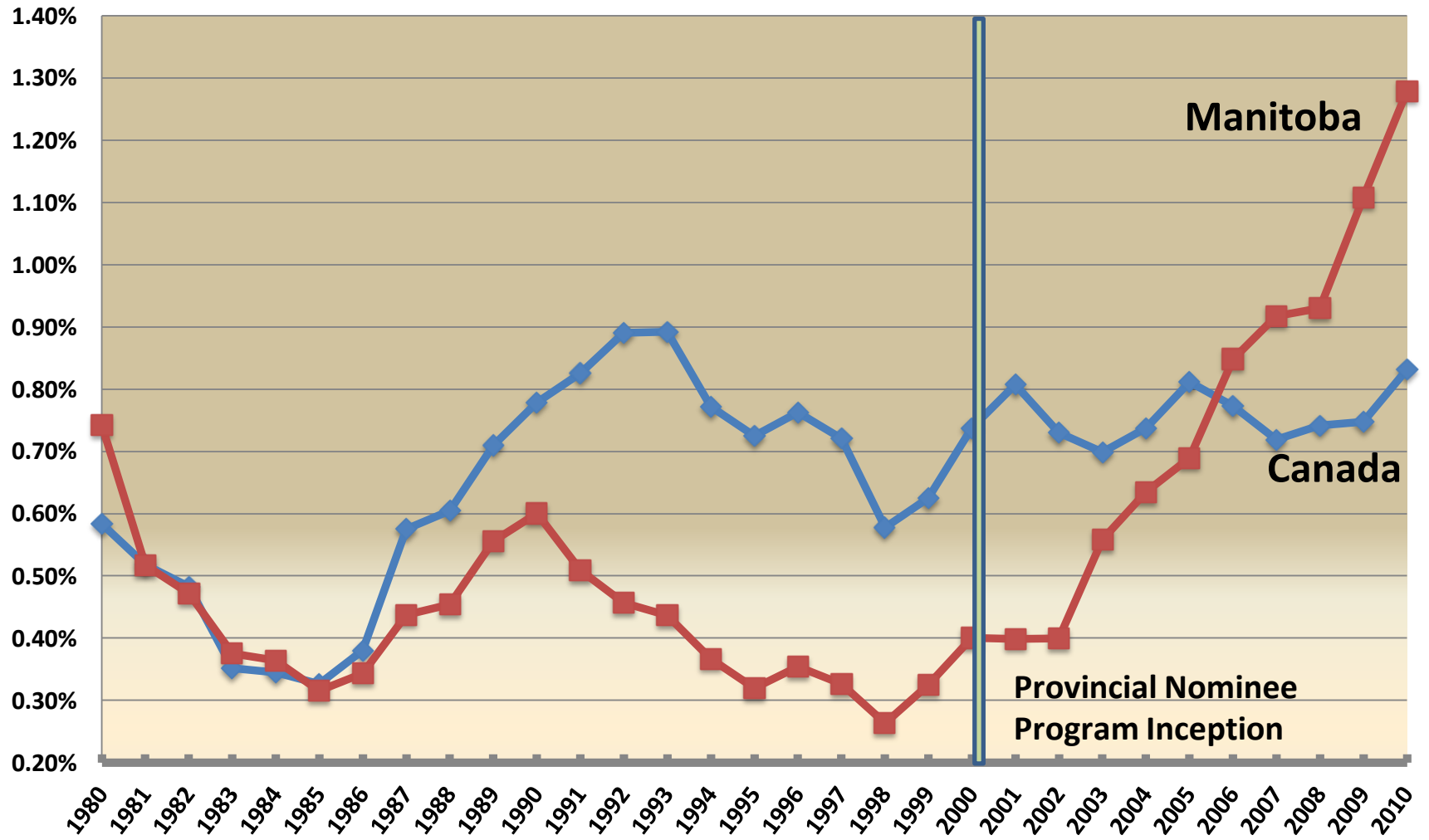


CHART C

Nominee vs Other Immigrants

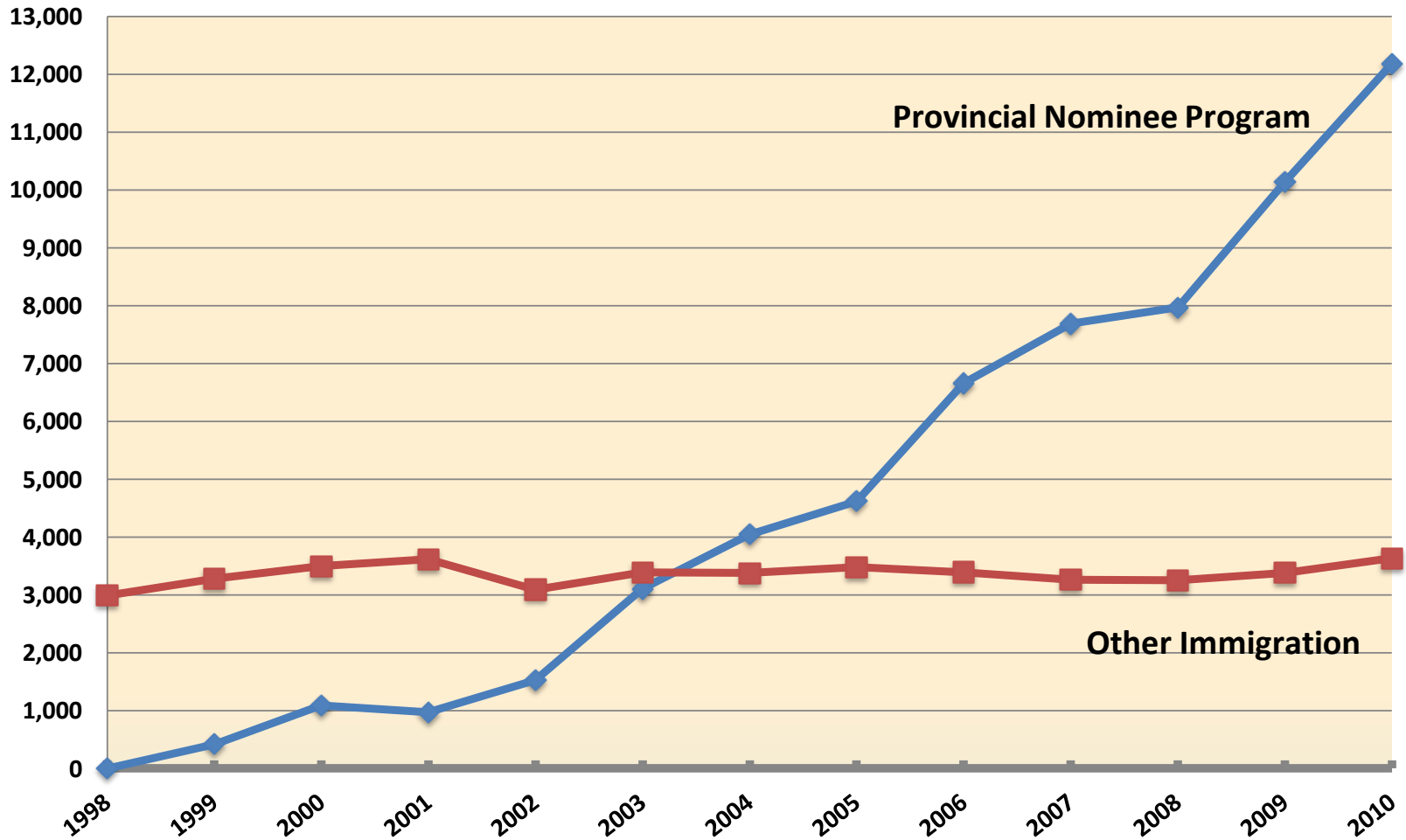


CHART D

Manitoba Immigration as a % of Canada's Immigration

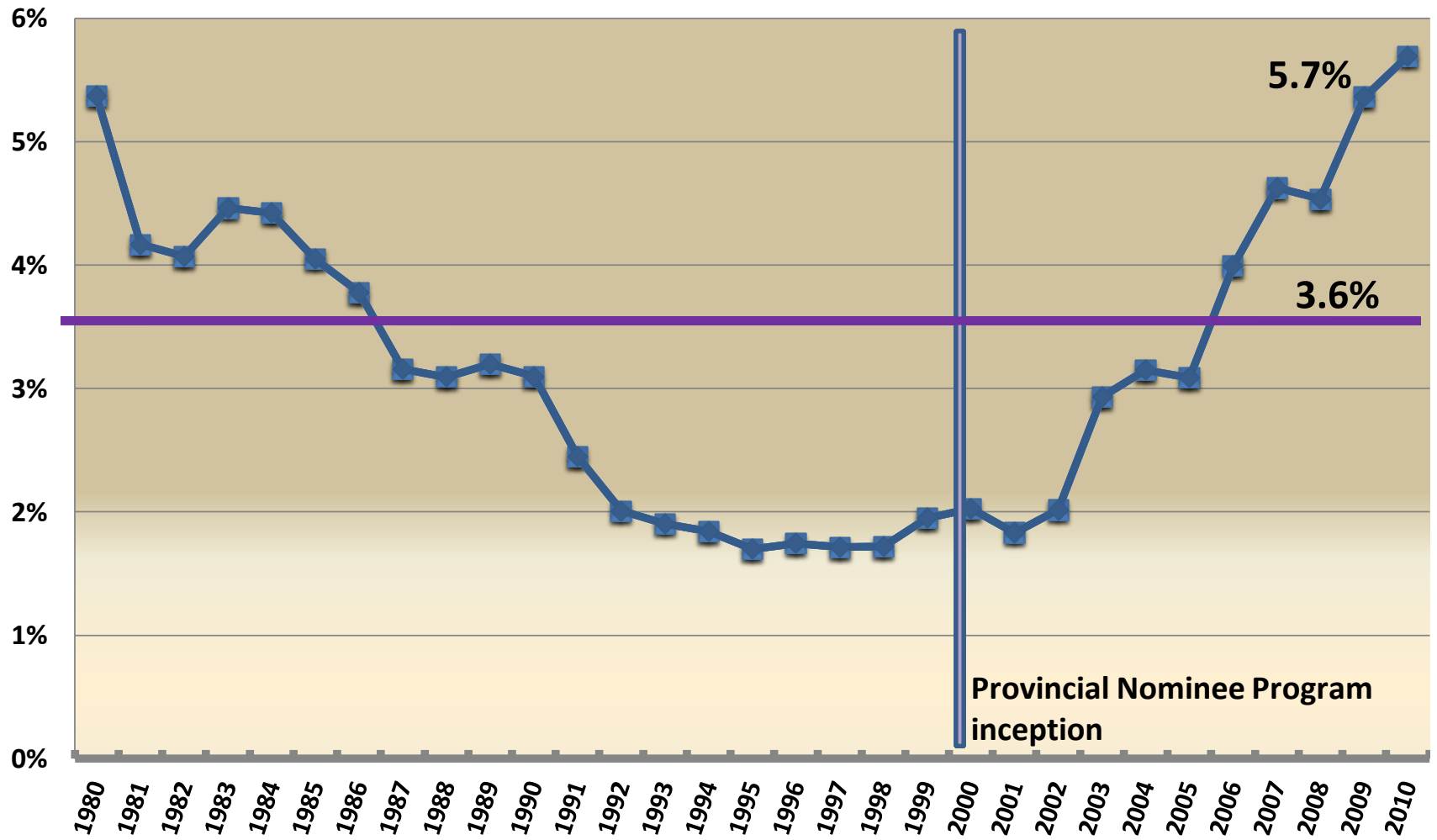


CHART E

Provincial Unemployment Rate vs. Number of Immigrants to Manitoba

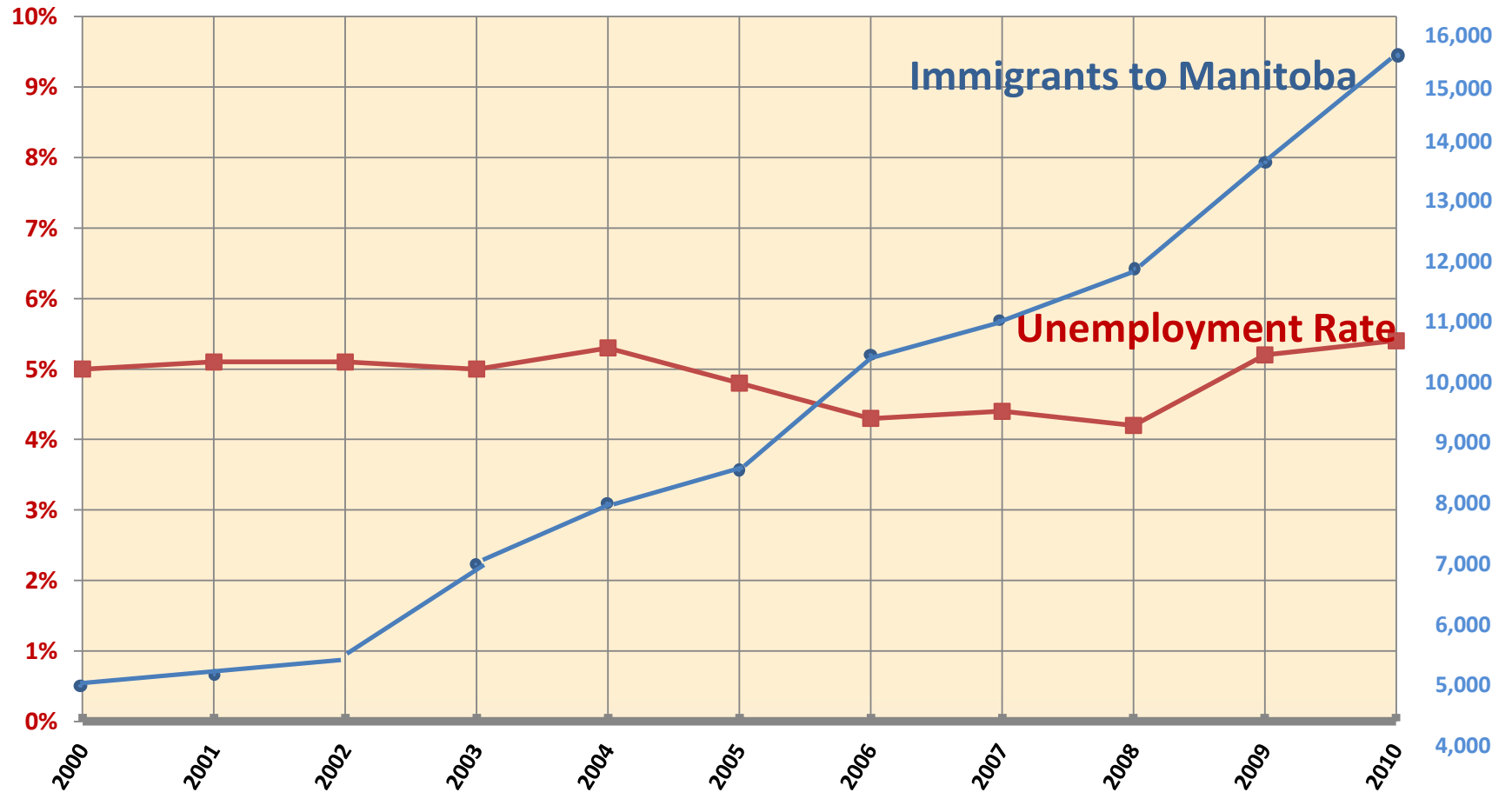


CHART F

Canada/US Immigration as a % of Population

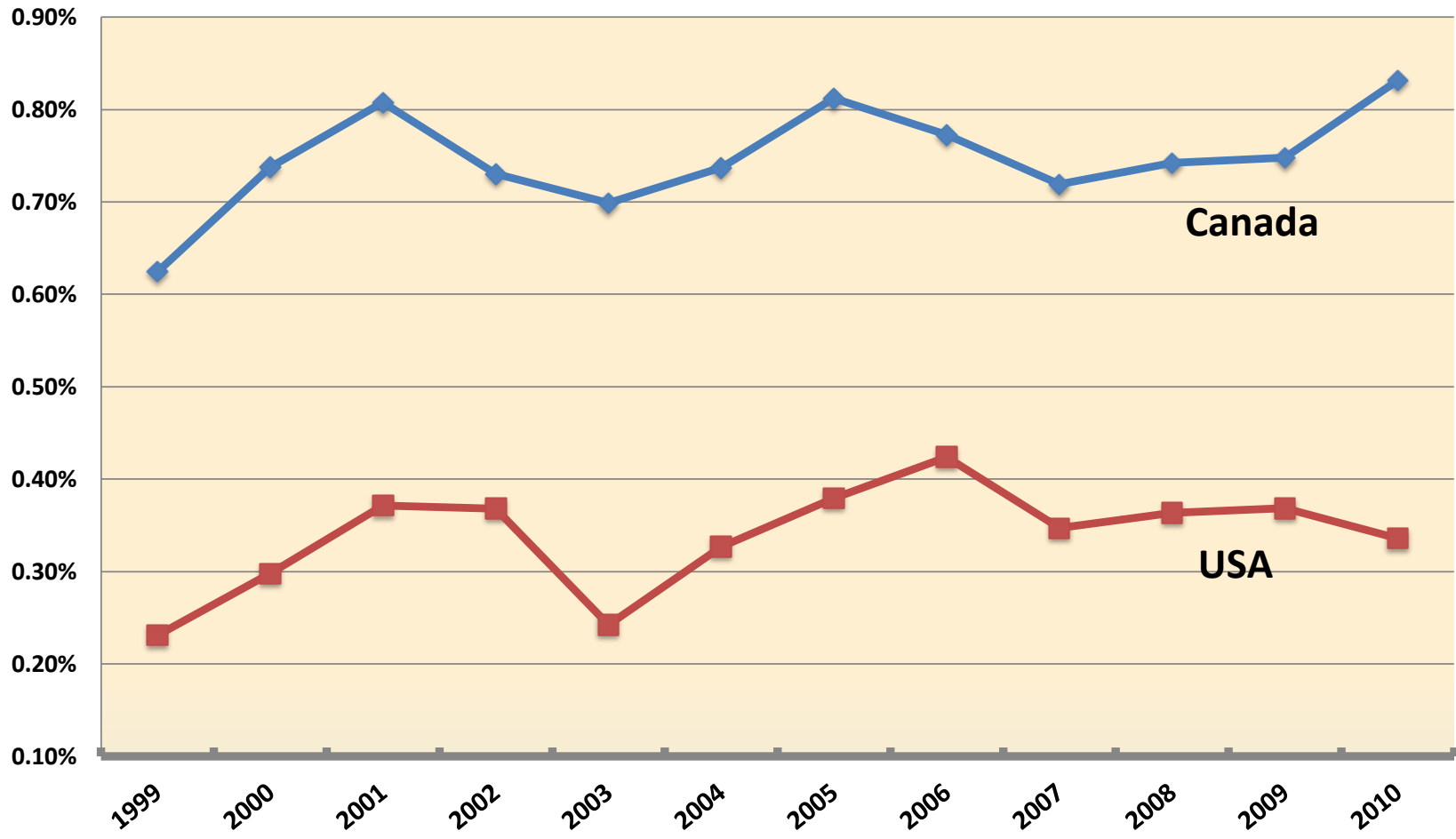


CHART G

