

Global Forum on Migration and Development

Breakout Session 3:

Labor Mobility and Skills Development for Inclusive Growth and Jobs

November 21, 2012

1120 – 1300

Updated with 2014 charts

The primary role of the private sector relative to migration is normally perceived as the provision of employment opportunities. Business is often neutral on the question of temporary versus permanent migration as long as its needs are served. I will take the view that Business can play a much more constructive role and use a personal example from Canada.

Many developed countries such as Canada face a short term skills challenge and an even greater long term demographic challenge. I will suggest that temporary migration may be appropriate in situations that have a genuine temporary nature – but where the labor demand is long term these countries should focus on strategies that allow for permanent immigration leading to full rights and citizenship. A program leading to citizenship and integration will result in greater development of the person and minimizes the opportunity for abuse of the migrant.

Many countries lack the policy framework and internal consensus to make large scale immigration welcome and successful. The example from Canada and specifically the Province of Manitoba suggests that business can play a leading role in the development and implementation of such a policy.

1. North America map with Manitoba

The Province of Manitoba is isolated, has a small population, cold climate, and few natural resources or advantages. Its greatest resource are its people – resilient, resourceful and very tolerant of diversity. 15 years ago we were facing demographic disaster. The business community provided leadership to work with the provincial and national Governments to develop a new immigration program known as the Provincial Nominee Program that worked substantially independent of the established national program.

The business community was cohesive and played four important roles:

- A leading role in policy development
- Encouraged a program that was non-partisan among all political groups
- Developed consensus with other stakeholders such as unions and first nations
- Worked jointly with Government and civil society to create practical and effective implementation

2. Chart of immigration prior to 1998

The chart compares the arrival of immigrants to Manitoba and Canada as a proportion of population. Very clearly whatever immigration policies were in place stopped working for Manitoba in the 80's and 90's and we were in serious trouble.

3. Chart showing relative immigration to 2012

This is the same chart extended to 2012. No words are required to make the point that something dramatic occurred. Canada has a relatively strong immigration program but the intake to Manitoba now is almost double the Canadian rate as a proportion. To put that rate into perspective it is about 500% of the official United States official intake.

4. Comparative scale of immigration

This chart puts the scale of immigration into perspective. Note the relatively small proportion of US legal immigration. A key goal was diversity to avoid enclaves and social isolation. Immigrants have arrived from 137 countries. Home ownership rates after 5 years exceed the already high Canadian average. Most important there is no pushback by society or the political establishment.

5. Immigration and Unemployment

This chart indicates the relative unemployment rates in Manitoba and Canada. We were facing a labor shortage and in spite of this dramatic increase in immigration and in the absence of any major resource projects and no dominant industry – our unemployment rate stayed flat and barely budged during the 2008 recession. Time does not allow a full explanation but that result was directly related to our selection and settlement strategies.

6. Provincial population impact

The solid line is the Canadian rate of population increase and the dotted line is Manitoba. We started with a low rate of growth and now exceed the Canadian rate of population increase – a totally counterintuitive outcome. The impact on our local economy in terms of physical changes and a positive spirit is nothing short of dramatic.

Lessons and Conclusions

- The business community can participate and even drive policy initiatives in the area of immigration
- Business can contribute to keeping a potentially controversial policy non-partisan
- Temporary migration programs may be less appropriate if the real problem is demographic
- Diversity of immigration flow contributes to integration success
- Citizenship minimizes problems of abuse of migrants

Migration issues will vary enormously in different societies – but I am trying to make the case that developed countries with a demographic challenge should consider well-designed permanent immigration strategies that can meet the skills and labor challenge and be accepted in a positive manner by their societies.

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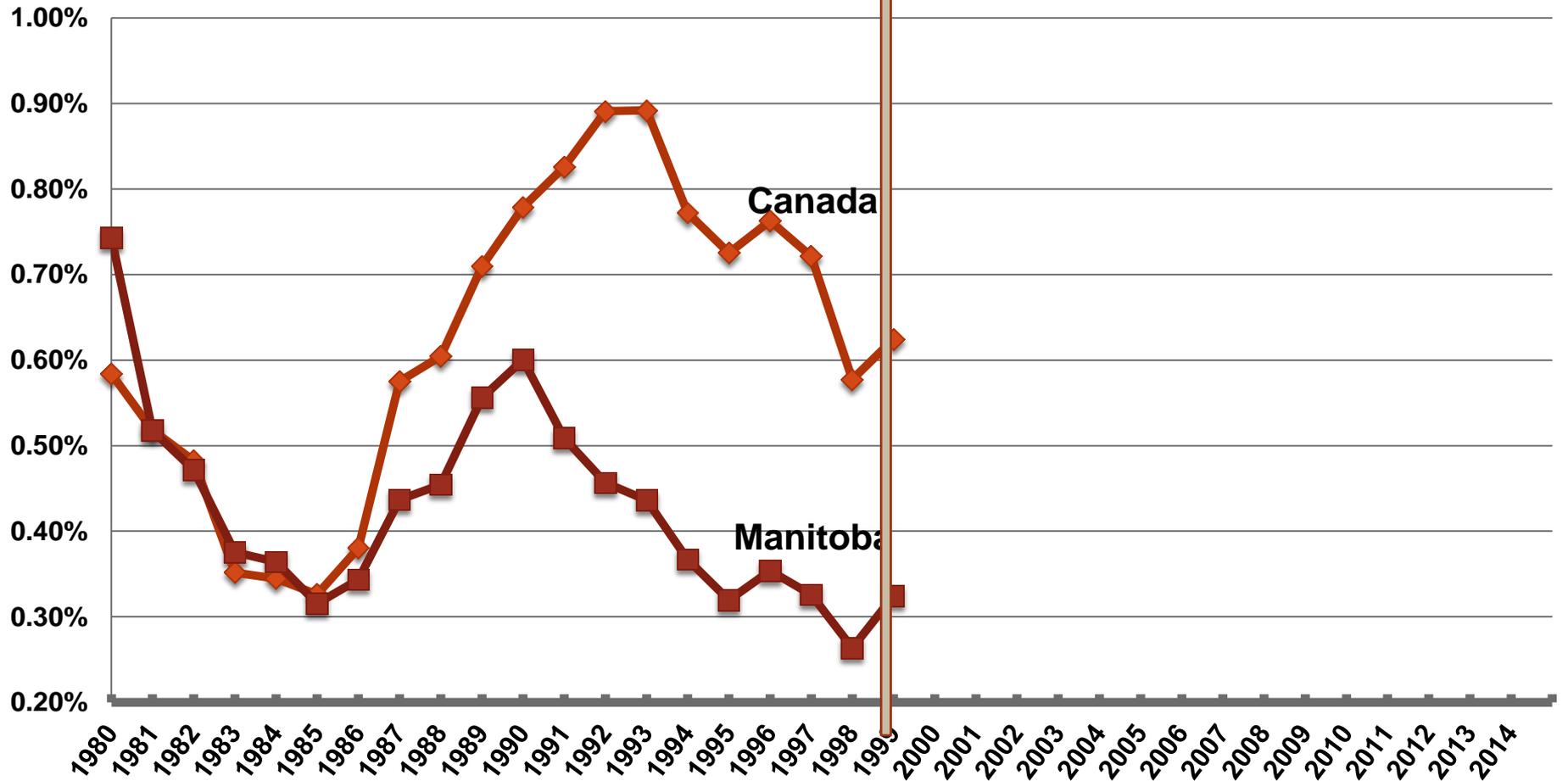
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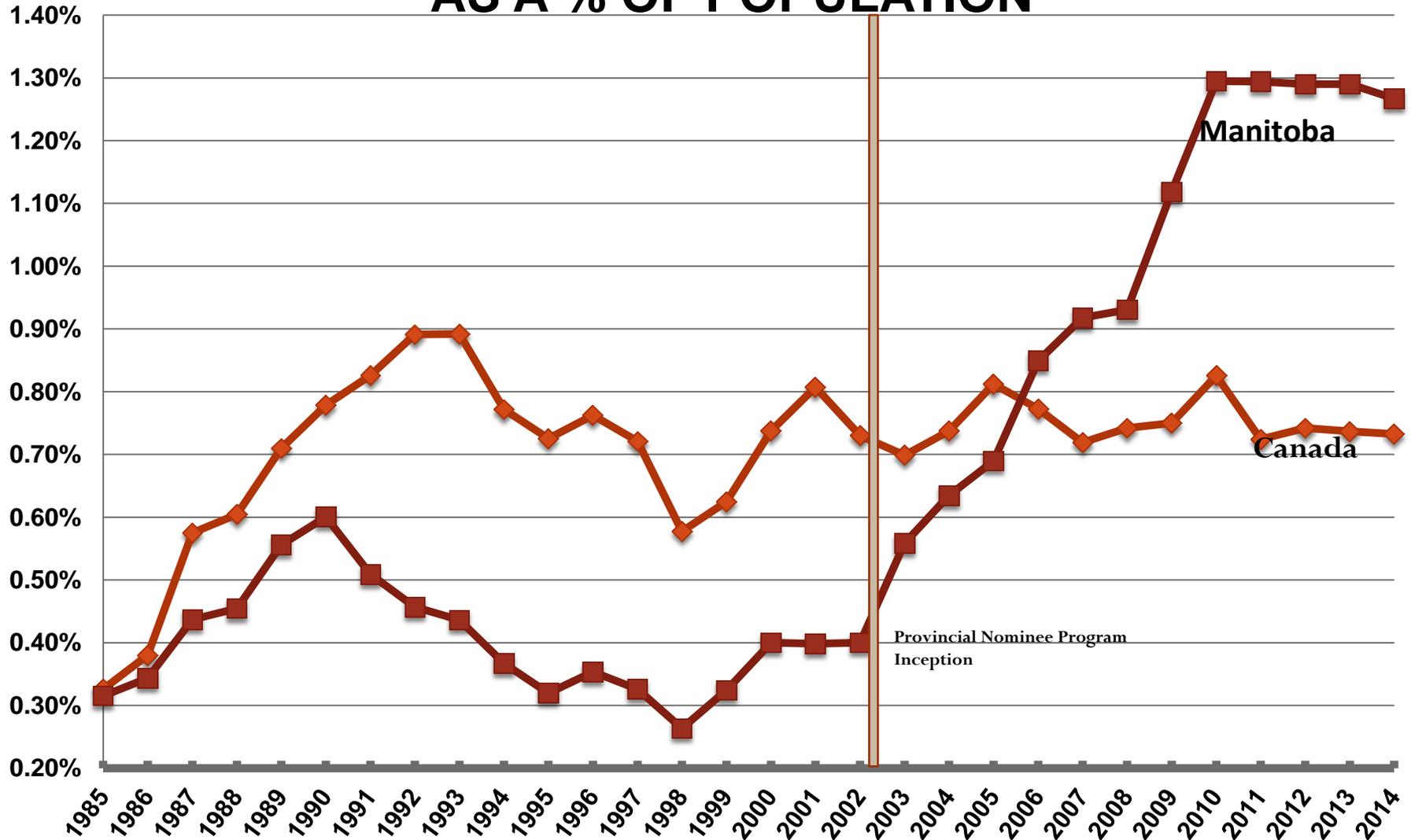
November 21, 2012 (updated with 2014 Charts)
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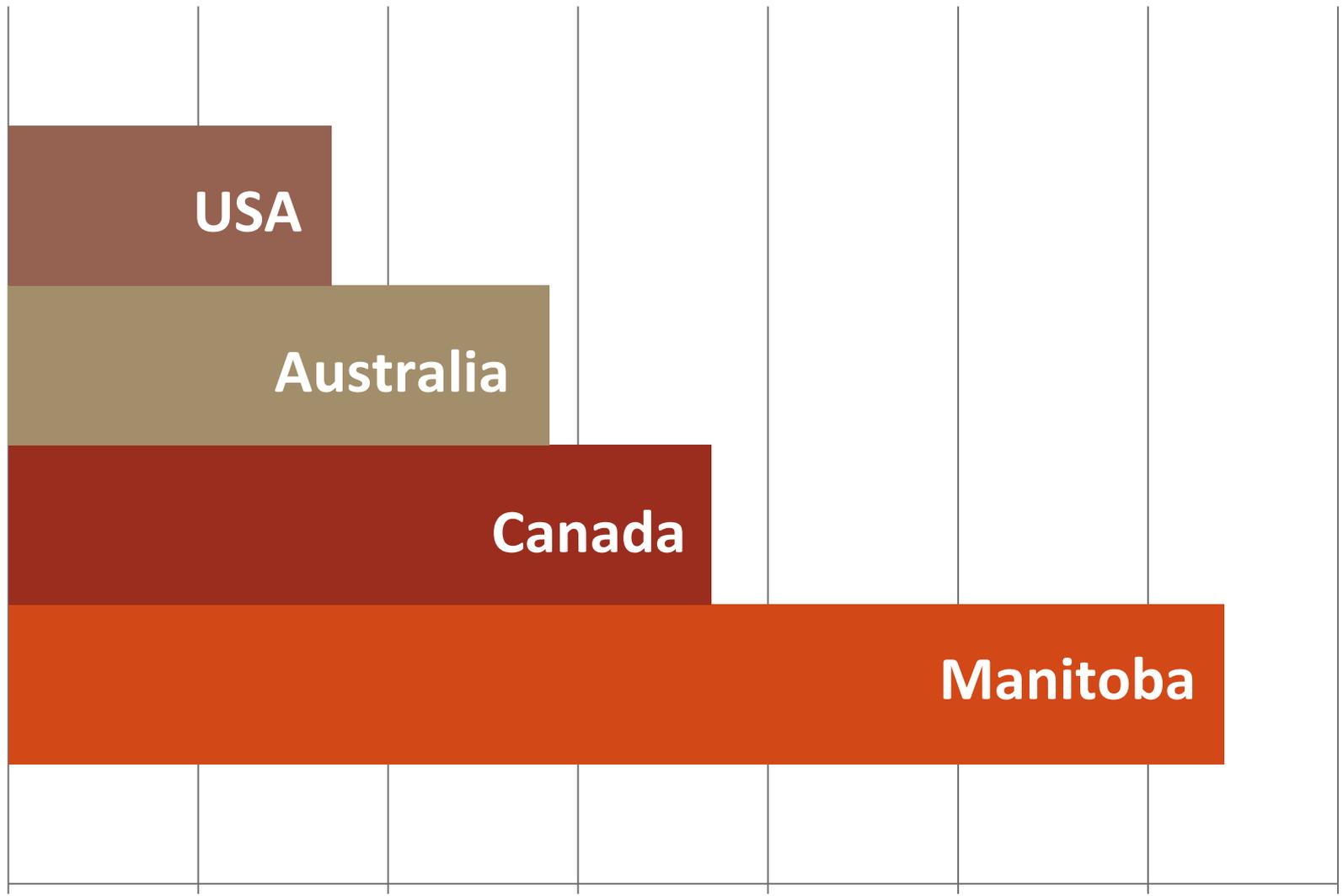
CANADA/MANITOBA IMMIGRATION AS A % OF POPULATION TO 1999



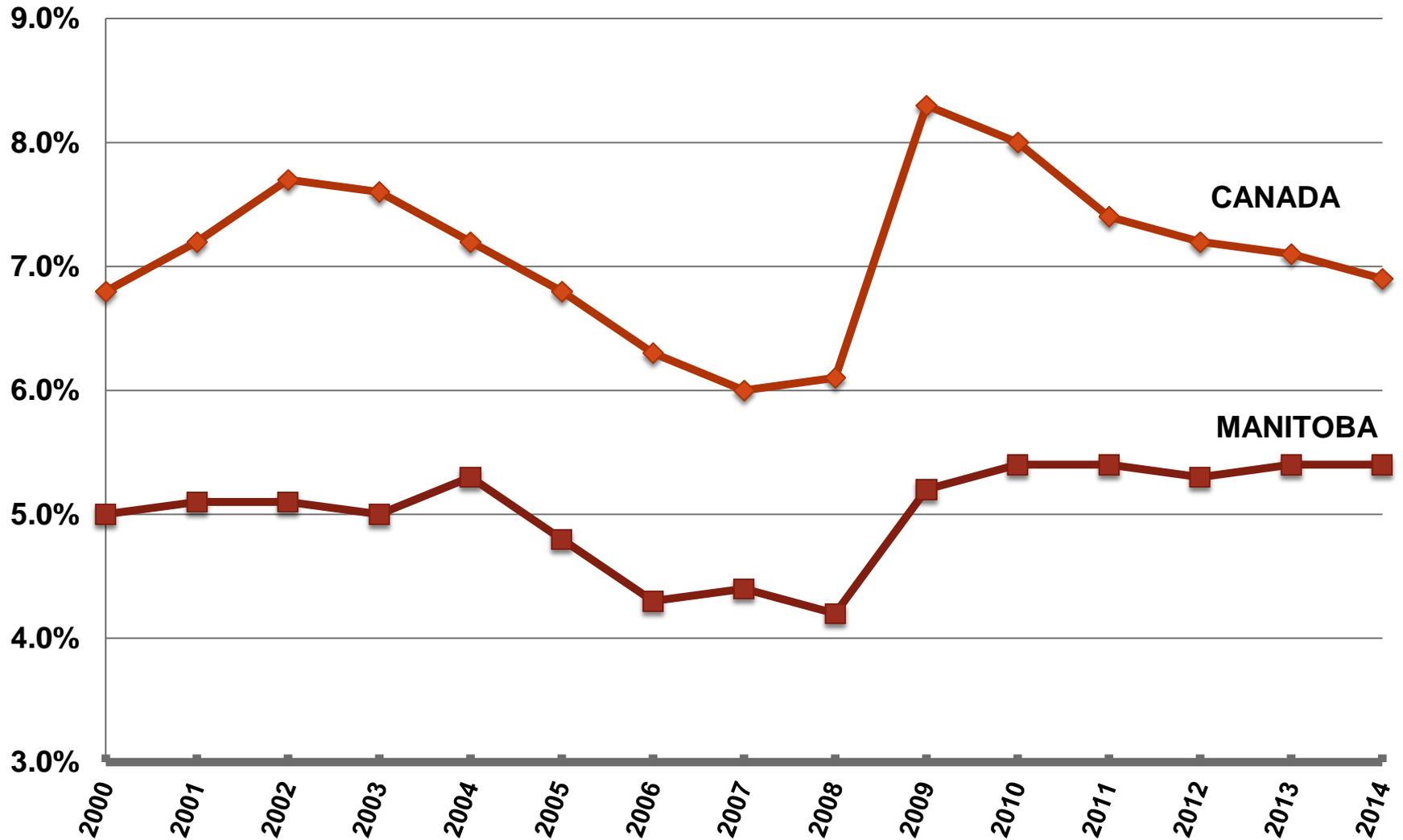
CANADA/MANITOBA IMMIGRATION AS A % OF POPULATION



COMPARATIVE IMMIGRATION



MANITOBA vs. CANADIAN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



ANNUAL POPULATION GROWTH

