

**Canadian cities are rapidly evolving into a fusion of cultures, religions, sexual orientations, experiences and values. While this mix is vibrant, some question whether social inequalities are putting this asset at risk.**

# 'super-diversity'

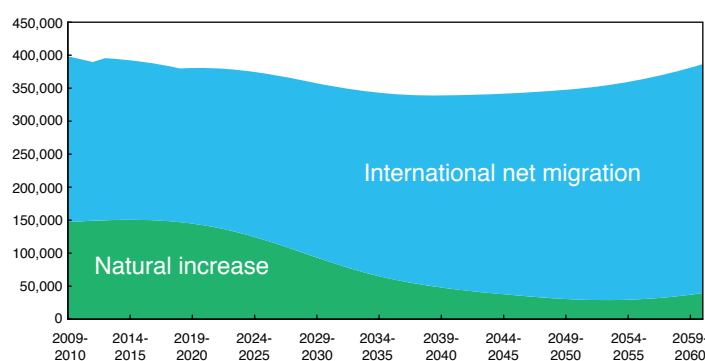
By 2031, according to a Statistics Canada analysis of current trends, more than 78 per cent of the population of Toronto, 70 per cent of the population of Vancouver, and 31 per cent of the population of Montreal will be immigrants or children born in Canada of immigrant parents.

Our largest cities have evolved into a kind of 'super-diversity,' a vibrant fusion of cultures, heritages, religions, sexual orientations, experiences and values, says Daniel Hiebert, co-director of Metropolis in Vancouver, one of five Centres of Excellence across Canada comprising the Metropolis Project. Dedicated to gathering and analyzing new information on immigration and cultural diversity in Canada, the project's research is used to facilitate informed policy-making, practice and public debate.

"Vancouver is consistently ranked as one of the world's most liveable cities, and while that is partly attributable to its natural beauty, our vibrant culture is always mentioned," he says.

Compared to many cities around the world, immigration in Canadian cities has been very positive. "Through our education system and other social institutions, governments at all levels have put a lot of effort into making this work," says Professor Hiebert. "We have an official policy of multiculturalism as a way of encouraging social cohesion in a highly diverse

## Population projections for Canada, provinces and territories



Source: Statistics Canada, Demography Division.

**Demographic growth of the Canadian population projected according to the natural increase and international net migration (Medium-growth scenario).**

## Community ties essential to integration

In a paper entitled "Why Do Recent Immigrants Leave Atlantic Canada?" Atlantic Metropolis Centre researchers Howard Ramos and Yoko Yoshida note that "one of the regions most struck by population loss and slow economic development is Atlantic Canada."

While the report provides ample evidence that both citizens and policy leaders in the region are interested in attracting immigrants, it also found that "newcomers find the region the second most difficult in Canada to adopt as a new home."

Their research concluded that poor economic performance and underemployment are associated with outmigration. Ties to extended family in the rest of Canada and experience of discrimination were also associated factors; immigrants least involved in community or other organizations were most likely to leave.

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society. For citizens, interacting on the street, at work and even in restaurants, it creates a pervasive cultural engagement that is tremendously important."

While immigration policy is determined at a national level, immigration's impact on individual Canadian cities is quite different, says Metropolis researcher Daniel Weinstock, Canada Research Chair, ethics and political philosophy, University of Montreal. "In Vancouver, immigration has had the effect of integrating the city into the larger Pacific economy; Toronto and Montreal do not have a single source of migration that has affected them as greatly."

The primary challenge in Canada's largest cities, as throughout Canada, is enabling access to the labour market, he says. "Integration is a lot easier on all dimensions if people are doing okay economically," says Professor Weinstock. "When people are accepted for immigration, we should make the path to economic integration clear."

Although Montreal is home to fewer immigrants than Toronto and Vancouver, immigration provides an important balance there to what would otherwise be a declining population, says Annick Germain, a professor at Institut national de la recherche scientifique-Urbanisation, Université du Québec and Metropolis researcher. "We have many neighbourhoods around downtown that are vibrant and animated because they

are home to many immigrants. Without them, we would have the problem, frequently seen in American cities, of an empty downtown."

Over the past 15 years, she says, immigration patterns in Montreal have shifted and quickened to the degree that most neighbourhoods are home to immigrants. "Although that has been the case for some time in Vancouver and Toronto, it is a new reality here in Montreal. People here are not quite sure about the impacts of that new reality, and questions are arising."

Toronto, with a population now estimated to be more than 50 per cent foreign-born, has an opportunity to lead the way in terms of successfully incorporating and leveraging the benefits of diversity, says Metropolis researcher and York University professor Valerie Preston. "In economic terms, and in terms of social and political inclusion, diversity is often referred to as Toronto's strength. On an everyday basis, we live very civilly with that diversity, but we must think about what we can do to address the growing inequality that threatens to undermine it."

There have been many initiatives in the greater Toronto regions that were successful in enabling access to labour market opportunity, she says. "We know these strategies work. The question is how we can make them available to larger numbers of people. The larger question we have to answer is, what kind of city do we want to be?"

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## In smaller centres, proactive approach critical to successful integration

While the majority of immigrants are settling in Canada's major metropolitan areas, recent statistics show a more dispersed pattern of settlement, meaning that the successful integration of immigrants is becoming an issue in places that have not historically seen themselves as hosts to newcomers.

"Many small communities are facing issues of demographic change, lower birthrates and aging populations, but they will continue to have service and health needs," says Margaret Walton-Roberts, associate professor of geography and director of the International Migration Research Centre at Wilfrid Laurier University. "Immigration is increasingly becoming one of the options to look to."

Communities that welcome immigrants most effectively take a proactive approach to the various stages of integration, she says. "First there are the issues of getting settled in an area, such as housing, schooling and health care. Then new immigrants need to find work – in many cases, they already have employment, but when they don't, communities need to have systems in place to assist, such as employment networks."

Over the longer term, successful integration requires effective community-

building. "There is an issue of belonging," says Dr. Walton-Roberts. "You want newcomers to stay, so you want to ensure that they feel welcome and safe, that they have involvement in the school board and local community centres, and effective representation through the political system."

In Manitoba, Steinbeck and Winkler have a long history of successful immigrant integration. "They initially began by bringing in newcomers who had a similar cultural background, such as German Mennonites. Then they started to diversify, and look to the Philippines, for example, using the same approaches to help families settle."

In Waterloo, Ontario, the community responded to the employment challenges faced by immigrants in Waterloo by convening a community summit. One of the results was the organization of the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network, which offers mentorship and internship programs to provide new immigrants with Canadian experience in their fields.

"The most successful models bring all community stakeholders together, including employers, government, community groups, business and immigrant service providers. Collectively, they can address the issues and change practices."

## MULTICULTURALISM

## Canada a model of success

At the 40th anniversary of the adoption of Canadian multiculturalism policies, Canada continues to be viewed by world leaders as a model of successful pluralism, and according to a recent poll, is supported by 75 per cent of native-born Canadians. Yet in Western Europe, multiculturalism is associated with growing unease and crisis in many countries, says Metropolis researcher David Ley.

"Multiculturalism means something quite different in different countries because it is grafted onto the distinctive societies already in place," says Professor Ley. In the Netherlands, for example, there has always been a policy called 'pillarization' – official recognition of the distinctive pillars in society. "Historically, those pillars were Catholic, Protestant and secular, and each was given institutional freedom to develop their own schools and even trade unions."

Immigration added another pillar. "In other words, what the Dutch call multiculturalism looks nothing like multiculturalism as it is practiced in Canada," he says. "To say that multiculturalism has failed in the Netherlands, therefore, is not relevant to the Canadian experience."

In the 40 years since the adoption of multiculturalism policy in Canada, many generations of children have gone through schools where multiculturalism is incorporated into the curriculum, says Dr. Ley.

"Acceptance and the respect for difference has become a Canadian value. The Multiculturalism Act, the Employment Equity Act and the Constitution contribute to an open institutional culture."

But he cautions that it is also important to recognize the limits of multiculturalism. "There are those who worry that multiculturalism is fragmenting, that it creates 'hyphenated Canadians' with competing loyalties. But multiculturalism today is not about celebrating heritage, if it ever was. Multiculturalism in Canada deals with issues such as anti-racism, employment equity, and equal treatment by police or immigration departments. It is about integration, not separation."

Some communities are also grappling with the boundaries of multiculturalism as applied to religious freedom, says Daniel Weinstock, a professor of philosophy at the University of Montreal. "It's no longer, 'I will be a fully participating member in Canadian society and obey all its rules, but I would like to continue to affirm my cultural identity.' We're hearing, 'We want the rules to apply in a different manner to us, given our religious traditions.' That's caught us a bit unaware. We're trying to come up with a framework for religious accommodation, worked out on the basis of the charter by the courts, but which citizens feel comfortable with as well."

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## Enhancing policy through research



Metropolis is an international network for comparative research and public policy development on migration, diversity, and immigrant integration in cities in Canada and around the world. The Metropolis Project began in Canada in 1996. The research carried out by its five Centres of Excellence is used extensively in policy development by officials at all three levels of government in Canada, by members of community groups that serve immigrants and refugees, and by research and policy organizations throughout the world.

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