



MCRI-2

2007 Meeting

**The fate of the
region:
attracting and
retaining
newcomers**

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Theme 3 in Halifax:

What factors contribute to innovation?

How well do newcomers fit into the region?

From the introduction to the interview guide:

Government and NGOs play an essential role in the learning economy. A key societal challenge is to create the conditions in which firms, associations, and public agencies engage in a collective process of interactive learning and adaptation to stimulate innovation, creativity and inclusion.



Theme 3 in Halifax:

What factors contribute to innovation?

How well do newcomers fit into the region?

Our questions investigated the conditions that facilitate or inhibit effective collaborative leadership and the broadly based civic engagement that integrates community stakeholders in a collective learning process aimed at creating a supportive context for innovation.



Theme 3 in Halifax:

What factors contribute to innovation?

How well do newcomers fit into the region?

Summer 2006 we interviewed:

- 13 government representatives
- 13 associations representatives



Questions (selected):

Are newcomers easily able to integrate into the Halifax city region?

What mechanisms are most effective for integrating them?

What challenges affect the integration of newcomers?

What physical features of Halifax help to attract and integrate newcomers?

What associations assist newcomers to integrate?

How do civic leaders in the region respond to the diverse gender, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds that newcomers bring?

How do local associations respond to new perspectives on regional development brought by newcomers?



Key themes: Need for newcomers

- History of slow growth or decline
- Desire for competitiveness (inside Canada and beyond)
- Need to attract and retain immigrants (past failures)





Key themes:

Challenge of integration

- Limited cultural and ethnic diversity (MTV syndrome: can't compete with pull of Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver)
- Two respondents insisted that “integration” should not mean assimilation



Key themes: Challenge of integration

A government representative said:

“It’s uni-cultural, right? White European. That’s not the future, you know. The future is diversity. So there’s a massive challenge there, I mean, bigger than anything I’ve ever seen. I mean, if Nova Scotia’s going to succeed and grow in the future, it has to open its view of life and realize the world is a diverse place and you have to welcome it. I think the thing is, if we achieve it, you know, we will have the kind of place where diverse cultures can come here and feel celebrated and be happy.”





Key themes:

Are newcomers welcomed?



- Parochialism in some places: anti-CFA attitudes (“come from away”)
- Special concern about “Upper Canada” or folks from Toronto (who come in “knowing everything”)
- But many conversely argued that the region is friendly to visitors



Key themes:

The attractions of Halifax

- Beautiful scenery, access to nature
- Small town feel in a big city
- High quality of life, slow pace, affordability
- Universities, hospitals, services



Two respondents said:

“Halifax shows really well.”

“It would be more difficult to do our job [selling the region] in Sudbury.”



Key themes: The barriers in Halifax

- Conservative views
- Maritime climate
- Focus on heritage (preserving the past) vs innovation (celebrating the new)





Key themes:

The barriers in Halifax

- Away from the “centre”, the action



Government respondent:

*“I lived a short time – a couple of years -- in Boston and when you live in the northeast corridor there – Boston’s at kind of the end of it, but you got New York and D.C. and Baltimore -- you really feel like you’re in the centre of the universe, because everything you see on the news is happening in your backyard. ... You move here and you feel disconnected from that. Your time zone – I find the time zone to be a problem. You know, **everything happens after you go to bed**. I like the West Coast for that reason. You get to watch the whole continent do their thing. You can read it on the news then go to sleep. It’s different here. So, yeah, I find geography to be limiting, I do.”*



The regional approach:

- Provincial Office of Immigration
- HRM Immigration Strategy 2005



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An association respondent remains skeptical:

“I don’t know what the City of Halifax is doing to be honest. They don’t really seem to get it. I mean the city is still divided by a racial line for God’s sakes! I don’t really know how they expect --They talk about multiculturalism in this city, and they haven’t even resolved the pervasive issues. It’s one of the things I find very displeasing about this city.”



The suggested fixes:

- Helping immigrants with credentials, language skills, finding services
- Government taking a leadership role by hiring immigrants, promoting diversity



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- Helping immigrants with credentials, language skills, finding services
- Government taking a leadership role by hiring immigrants, promoting diversity

An association respondent said:

“How do civic leaders in the region respond to diverse culture, gender, ethic and cultural backgrounds: great question, great question. They ignore it. And mostly because they don’t understand it. ... What the various communities can bring here, and what they can offer --it’s ignored at best. And you can ask the mayor that question, and you’ll get a lot of bullshit.”



Questions to consider:

- How can communities that are relatively homogeneous encourage and embrace diversity?
- Can smaller cities develop strategies to attract more immigrants?
- Can communities that don't attract immigrants still be "creative" and spur innovation?

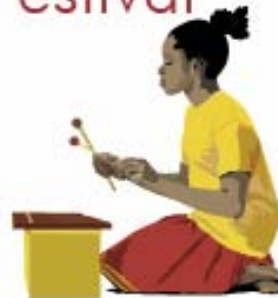


one world
one people

Nova Scotia Multicultural Festival

JUNE 15-17, 2007

Alderney Landing
Dartmouth waterfront





Halifax has many attractions ...

Halifax is a magnet for newcomers but largely from the Atlantic region
Most respondents believe that attracting immigrants will continue to be a challenge for the region

Retaining young people attracted to universities may be key to future success



Images from:

<http://www.sandyhines.com/halpict.htm>

Nova Scotia tourism, and Jill Grant

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