

The Host Program and Immigrant Retention on Prince Edward Island

Godfrey Baldacchino, Lisa Chilton,
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Abstract: This research project develops an informed and critical understanding of the role and dynamics of the Host Program and of its purported contribution to immigrant retention on Prince Edward Island. The study serves also as an external evaluation of the PEI Host Program; the first after many years. A triangular methodology solicited information from both the providers of the Host Program services (the volunteers plus the Host Program staff at the PEI settlement agency) as well as from its various clients (recent immigrants). The research project outcomes include: a more sophisticated appreciation as to what are perceived to be the benefits of the Host Program by different client groups; what actual and potential services are expected from the Host Program by recent immigrants to PEI; and what aspects of this program, if any, actually facilitate or contribute to immigrant retention on PEI.

1. Context

While Canada earns high marks as a country that looks kindly on immigration, not all parts of Canada qualify. The irony of the four Atlantic Provinces is that – unlike most of the rural or remote regions of the country - these have actually been of late the destination of much larger inflows of immigrants, thanks mainly to the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) (Akbari, 2008). And yet, in spite of the influx, the evidence so far suggests that few of these newcomers choose to stay in the region. While “hyper-diversity” (Biles *et al.* 2008: 3) may be what brands Canada, mono-culturalism still rules undisturbed in Atlantic Canada.

The Atlantic region suffers from a series of vicious cycles that contour the migration experience, and with no end in sight. While Canada absorbs 250,000 or so newcomers every year, the four Atlantic provinces attract less than 3% of these¹⁰, even though they still comprise some 7% of the national population. And so, while visible minorities now represent some 75% of immigrants to Canada as a whole, the proportion of visible minorities in the Atlantic provinces remains abysmally low, ranging from 1.1% (NL, 2006) to 4.2% (NS, 2006), and with a mean of 2.6% of the total resident population (2006 Census). Moreover, the retention rate of those immigrants who *do* come to the region is equally poor, when compared to the rest of the country. Indeed, along with Saskatchewan, the four Atlantic Provinces have systematically had the lowest retention rates of immigrants by province in the country, ranging from 36% (NL) to 62% (NB).

Akbari (2008) provides some insights into this recent flow of (mainly PNP-facilitated) newcomers broken down by province in the Atlantic region. Ironically, while PEI was the province in the region with the *largest* percentage increase in the number of landed immigrants during the inter-census period (from 134 landings in 2001 to 585 landings in 2006: a 437% increase)¹¹, it is the only province in Atlantic Canada that has seen its retention rate of landed immigrants actually *fall* by 7% (from 60% to 53%) in the same period (Meanwhile, NB, NL and NS registered modest increases of 8%, 4% and 15% respectively).

¹⁰ This percentage ignores the recent spike in immigrant arrivals due to a temporary ‘window of opportunity’ in Provincial Nominee Program regulations. That window has closed, effective 02 September 2008.

¹¹ There were 987 landings reported for 2007 (Kevin J. Arsenault, personal communication, July 2008). Statistics Canada (2007) suggests that, in the third quarter of 2007, “immigrants entered the province [PEI] at an annualized rate of 12.1 for every 1,000 population”, significantly above the national mean of 8.7.

The four Atlantic provinces of Canada share major and abiding concerns with their low immigrant retention rates¹²; and their provincial governments in particular are likely to be well disposed to support targeted research into what mechanisms they may deploy to improve their retention rates¹³. Of course, this is being said on the understanding that provincial governments *actually desire* higher retention rates, and do not see the Maritime provinces as merely transit stations where immigrants deposit their funds before they rush off to settle elsewhere.

2. Barriers to Migration to Prince Edward Island . . .

Policy analysts have identified two main barriers to successful immigrant integration: the inability of migrants to adapt to the host society, and systematic discrimination in the host society (Wang and Lo, 2007). Both barriers are at work on PEI. Prince Edward Island's singular cultural mould – what has been described as “a strong cultural norm of sameness” (PEI Population Panel, 1999: 56) - is a powerful source of bonding social capital and resourcefulness from which this small Island community has benefited handsomely in the face of rampant globalization. Growing up in an ascribed network of relatives and friends, most Islanders walk through life in regular company of the same social cohort, with whom they connect and thus reinforce relationships. It is this same intensive social interaction – a “communal togetherness” (Weale, 1992: 10) which doubles as a “straitjacket of community surveillance” (*ibid.*: 9) - that can induce islanders to seek escape and solace via self-imposed exile. For better or for worse, any immigrants to Prince Edward Island automatically do not belong to this network. Nor can they ever fully belong, though their children might, if they persevere: one has to be *born* on PEI to be an ‘Islander’; otherwise, immigrants will forever remain ‘CFAs’: (‘come from aways’) (*e.g.* Wright, 2009). Thus, what is a source of support for self-professed Islanders acts to thwart diversity, and can even be perceived as a subtle (but unintentional) form of racism:

“This is what different immigrants have explained as finding bewildering, exasperating, cliquist, small-minded, petty, racist ...and invariably difficult to plug into. No wonder immigrants find themselves befriending other immigrants.

¹² Provincial Government of New Brunswick (2008); Provincial Government of Nova Scotia (2005); Provincial Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (2007). PEI, notably, does not (yet) have an official immigrant settlement strategy, though one is expected to be unveiled in the fall of 2009.

¹³ The Principal Investigator has already successfully coordinated parallel research in all four Atlantic Provinces during 2007-08, in this case in connection with challenges faced by Internationally Educated Health Professionals.

The islander versus 'come from away' category is an important contemporary social divide on PEI (just like the *red-blue* partisan one) and contributes to a reservoir of mutual misunderstanding" (Baldacchino, 2006: 74).

Islanders are badly equipped in the skills that would enable them to reach out to newcomers and help the latter integrate better in the host society: they lack 'bridging social capital' (after Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). The practice becomes effectively, though not intentionally, exclusionary and discriminatory. *Globe and Mail* columnist John Ibbitson fails to appreciate the value of social solidarity, and is thus very harsh in his commentary on the outcome of this, yet another, vicious cycle:

"The racial homogeneity is pronounced ... Immigrants shun these communities ... These communities, in turn, display little zeal to attract immigrants, reveling instead in their so-called cultural heritage, which is really a desiccated remnant of Canada's colonial past" (Ibbitson, 2005: 34).

These observable trends continue to bear out two sets of important characteristics. First, that no large cities, no immigrant clusters, no perceived economic opportunities, lower wages and a shortage of health human resources and services, all conspire to make Prince Edward Island - and the Atlantic region generally - less attractive to immigrants. Second, a tightly webbed 'WACS' (White, Anglophone, Christian and Straight/Heterosexual) monoculture acts as a rather understated but nevertheless powerful socio-cultural barrier to successful immigrant integration.

3. ... and Opportunities for 'Breaking In'

Breaking into PEI society, therefore, is tough; but it is not impossible. Various respondents to a 2005 survey of 320 recent immigrants to PEI narrate personal episodes of some success (Baldacchino, 2006). These respondents have commented on, and identified, the critical role played by certain institutions - such as local churches, local employers or local friendship, sport and neighbourhood groups - which allow newcomers a social space where they may feel sufficiently welcome and at ease. These spaces tend to be non-threatening environments where immigrants (and other newcomers) play a more significant role, are active or involved in greater numbers, and interact with hosts in a manner that does not reinforce or showcase their difference. These host-guest encounters usually include the involvement of one of four kinds of brokers: (a) *community broker* (like a neighbour, a local employer, a local school, the Welcome Wagon program, a Newcomers Club, a local sports club, the federally-sponsored Host Program run by the PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada, or the island relatives of one's spouse); (b) a local *church*, (c) an '*alternative*' *forum* (like the

[already fairly liberal] arts community or the Farmers' Market) and (d) an *employer* in the private or public sector obliged to recruit from beyond the Island's tight labour market.

4. Connection to the Host Program

If one relates these experiences to programs supported by the federal government for the successful settlement of immigrants, the singular initiative that speaks to a facilitation of such 'host-guest' encounters is the Host Program. First introduced in 1985, the Host Program is designed to assist newcomers with integration into Canadian life. The Host Program helps immigrants overcome the stress of moving to a new country by matching them with trained Canadian volunteer hosts, who become their "new Canadian friends". These Canadian Host volunteers help newcomers by being there for moral support, facilitating information about and access to social events, directing them to available services, practising English or French, or assisting to obtain contacts in their field of work. At the same time, the Host volunteer will learn about other cultures and other countries, thereby providing an important knowledge link concerning the benefits of immigration¹⁴. Ironically, this is the least funded of the several settlement programs supported by Citizenship and Immigration Canada¹⁵.

On PEI, the Host program has various streams. The most important two are: (1) the Friendship stream, which primarily involves immigrant refugee clients who typically have higher-order needs and higher levels of dependency; and (2) the English as a Second Language (ESL) stream, which is focused specifically on English tutoring. This is a one-on-one tutoring scheme modeled on the Regina Public Library model¹⁶. Another, less subscribed, but still significant, expression of the Host program includes the Holiday Host stream, started in 2006, whereby local volunteers invite an immigrant family into their home for a meal over a holiday period¹⁷.

The importance of the Host Program as "key to the process of adaptation for newcomers to PEI" is identified by Arsenault (2008: 30) in his consultancy report to the PEI Provincial Government. Newcomers to PEI registered with the Host Program can

¹⁴ <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/newcomers/host-newcomer.asp>

¹⁵ E.g. HOST Program budget for 2007-08 is indicated as \$10m; much less than that allocated to LINC (\$174.7m); ISAP (\$173.6m); or RAP (\$49.5m). Biles (2008: 176, Note 6).

¹⁶ The program is designed to give tutor trainees the basic tools for tutoring ESL learners, and to make facilitators' lives easier by providing ready-to-use overheads and handouts. The program consists of 8 sessions of 2-3 hours each. For training kit, see Rutten-James (2003).

¹⁷ Information from Joey Seaman, PEI-ANC, e-mail communication, September 24, 2009.

“make new friends” by either having a Host match, a volunteer English tutor, attending social events, joining conversation circles, attending summer activities, or all of the above. In 2007, a total of 118 active volunteers were registered with the PEI-ANC: of these, 33 were Friendship stream volunteers, while the remaining 85 were ESL or Holiday Host stream volunteers (*ibid.*).

5. Research Project Rationale and Deliverables

The main hypothesis of this targeted research pilot project is that immigrant involvement in the Host Program facilitates and improves immigrant retention in the province of landing. The key community partner in this project is the Prince Edward Island Association for Newcomers to Canada (PEI-ANC), which is the sole administrator of the Host Program on Prince Edward Island¹⁸. This study explores the features and impact of this program by adopting a triangular methodology, connecting with both “host” and “guest” participants in the Host Program. It also deploys both a quantitative and a qualitative research component. The project proposal was kindly approved by the research ethics board of the University of Prince Edward Island. The study is the most thorough external evaluation of the PEI Host Program to date¹⁹.

The study first sought to identify and track the current location of the full population of refugees and provincial nominee beneficiaries who had arrived on Prince Edward Island between 18 to 24 months before the project study – that is, the period around September to December 2006 (Phase I of the Study). The 18-24 month rule is similar to other benchmarks utilised in the determination of immigrant retention rates in Canada. This section of the study was undertaken solely by the PEI-ANC Host Program coordinators, using their immigrant database, and thus ensuring that there would be no breach of anonymity or confidentiality. Given the relatively small number of refugees that had landed in this brief time-window, it was decided to expand this on either side, thus covering a wider span of time: January 2006 to June 2007. The identification of how many of these landed immigrants were still living in PEI at the time of the study immediately provided a robust estimate of the immigrant retention rate for the province. Moreover, some insights can be determined as to who has been better or less retained on Prince Edward Island in recent years.

Next, the study invited recent immigrants – refugees and PNP beneficiaries, including those contacted in Phase I, but involving others as well - to volunteer for a face to face, semi-structured interview, dealing mainly with the benefits and challenges of the Host

¹⁸ http://www.peienc.com/content/page/programs_host/.

¹⁹ An external evaluation of the PEI Host Program was commissioned by Citizenship and Immigration Canada in 2001 (Larkin, 2001).

Program on PEI; or else about their experiences with the challenges of settlement if they had not partaken of the Host Program (Phase II). Some of the key questions addressed in this interview were:

- How important was the Host Program in your settlement experience? Why? Why not?
- What in particular about the Host Program did you appreciate most, and least?
- In your experience, which features of island life were best facilitated by the Host Program?
- What suggestions or recommendations would you have to those who run Host Programs, with a view to making them even more effective?

From their responses, patterns of commonality were determined, allowing for generalised comments that do not speak to particular cases or responses.

Moreover, one of the student research assistants engaged in this study - Shine-Ji Youn Chung - focussed explicitly on recent immigrants from South Korea, her co-nationals. This allows for a commentary that is specific to the immigrants from that national-ethnic group: probably the first time that such a discriminatory analysis of immigrants has been undertaken for PEI.

Finally, as Phase III, the research project organized a focus group session for which 9 Canadian Host Program volunteers participated, along with members of the research project team and various members of the PEI-ANC staff. This 75-minute session, held on October 8 2009 at the PEI-ANC premises in Charlottetown, permitted a presentation of this project's interim findings, and allowed Host Program volunteers to present their reactions and comments on the opinions of the immigrants interviewed in Phase II, address salient questions highlighted by the research findings, while sharing and comparing their own experiences. The research project team prepared a simple, 8-slide power-point presentation with the results of both Phase I and (especially) Phase II for this event, during which three questions were explicitly presented:

- What is the link, if any, between Host Program experiences and immigrant retention on Prince Edward Island? How well does the Host Program serve as 'community broker', facilitating immigrant settlement on Prince Edward Island?
- How can Host Program Volunteers on PEI improve the immigrants' settlement experience? Should the Host Program mandate be broadened – to cover such areas as facilitating introductions, developing networks and networking strategies, and securing jobs? And, if yes, how?

- How would you define your relationship with your Host Program Client(s)? Is it largely an equal (peer) relationship or an unequal one? What are the effects of this?

The exercise has served as an external assessment into the workings of the Host Program and its impact on, and effectiveness for, immigrant retention in the province.

This report also benefits from the insights provided separately by the two student research assistants in two brief, independent monographs (Chung, 2009; Mathiang, 2009).

6. Insights on Retention Rates

A total of 143 individuals from 44 different families – a mean of 3.25 members per family - were registered with the PEIANC as having benefitted from the PNP and landed on PEI between 01 September and 31 December 2006. By May 2009, 11 of these families, comprising 37 net individuals, were registered as still living on PEI²⁰.

For refugee class immigrant arrivals, a total of 28 families with 93 family members – a mean of 3.32 members per family – were registered as having landed on PEI between 01 January 2006 and 30 June 2007. Of this total, 9 families, with 29 family members in all, were still residing in PEI in May 2009. (See Table 1)

For contextual purposes, one should note that these 236 arrivals represent approximately one third of all immigrant arrivals to PEI between September 2006 and June 2007: around 684 immigrants landed on PEI within that 9-month time window²¹. This makes the study population a 34% sample of the whole immigrant population within that period.

The retention rate for PNP beneficiaries is marginally lower than for that pertaining to refugee immigrants (25% as against 32%, if worked by family; 26% as against 31% if worked by individual). The difference is statistically significant, and within the margins of error as determined from the size of the populations.

The mean gross retention rate for immigrants from these two immigration classes combined works out at 28% (whether calculated by family or by net individuals): much lower than the figures quoted by Akbari (2008). Former Minister responsible for

²⁰ Information in this section of the report was leaked to the press and appeared in an article in *The Guardian* (Wright, 2009).

²¹ Interpolated from annual figures available from official provincial statistics.

Immigration, Richard Brown, was however quite correct when he declared that the immigrant retention rate in the province was “just 30%” (CBC News, 2008).

Table 1: Immigrant Retention Rates on Prince Edward Island (based on 143 PNP Arrivals and 93 Refugee Class Arrivals: Total of 236 persons).

PNP arrivals (01 Sept -31 Dec 2006)	44 families	143 individuals
Still living on PEI (May 2009)	11 families	37 individuals
Retention Rate:	25%	26%
Refugee Class Immigrant Arrivals (Jan 06 - June 07)	28 families	93 family members
Still living on PEI (May 2009)	9 families	29 family members
Retention Rate:	32%	31%
Mean Gross Retention Rate	28%	28%
PNPs still on PEI who are living in Charlottetown	10 families out of 11	The rest: 1 in Alberton
Refugees still on PEI who are living in Charlottetown:	7 families out of 9	The rest: 1 in Cornwall, 1 in Summerside
European Immigrants who are still on PEI	1 family out of 6	In Alberton
Asian Immigrants who are still on PEI	11 families out of 54	10 in C'town, 1 in Cornwall
Newcomers who arrived as single individuals, still on PEI	2 single individuals out of the original 12	(1 in C'town, 1 in Summerside)
Multi-member families still on PEI	18 families out of the original 60	(16 in C'town, 1 in Alberton, 1 in Summerside)

Migration to the province is also decidedly an urban phenomenon – just like in the rest of the country. Of the 20 families in the targeted PNP and refugee population still living in the province, all except 3 are living in Charlottetown.

Retention rates do not appear to change when country/region of origin is taken into account. White European immigrants are just as likely to leave PEI and resettle elsewhere in Canada as immigrants from Asia. Single immigrants *are twice as likely* to

leave PEI and resettle elsewhere as those arriving to the island province as family members.

7. Introducing Immigrant Comments and Concerns

We now move to the analysis of Phase II of the research project. In all, 43 individuals accepted the invitation to take part in a face-to-face interview where a semi-structured questionnaire was used to elicit comments about the experience with the Host Program and with the settlement experience generally. The interviews were held by Benjamin Mathiang and Shine Chung between late May and early July 2009. A succinct analysis of their replies follows below, punctuated by suitable quotations, in three, mutually exclusive segments: (a) the responses from refugee class immigrants (9 responses); (b) the responses from immigrants from South Korea who came to PEI as Provincial Nominees (24 responses); and (c) other immigrants, mainly PNP (but not Korean) beneficiaries (10 responses).

There are specific reasons why this particular study was undertaken explicitly with refugee class and PNP immigrant beneficiaries. To us, and following various discussions, the two sub-groups were selected because they represent very different groups of immigrants (in terms of language competencies, net asset wealth, level of education, occupational background and aspirations, family size, ...). Thus, in principle, these sub-sets would present very different clusters of reasons as to what they think about the Host Program, how these immigrants would experience their arrival and settlement on PEI and why they would come, stay or leave Prince Edward Island. This hypothesis is actively borne out and confirmed by the evidence gleaned from this study.

Secondly, the portfolio of immigration and settlement services on PEI is also changing with time: it used to be dominated by refugee immigrants, but has now shifted to handling larger numbers of immigrants who have mainly entered the province as PNP beneficiaries²³. The PEI provincial government, the PEI-ANC (as the provincial settlement agency), as well as other servicing institutions, would do well to examine the implications of this radical qualitative and quantitative change on their mandate, activities and resources.

For reasons of anonymity and confidentiality, additional characteristics of the individual respondents (such as age, country of origin, first language, and professional

²³ Out of a total of 992 immigrants to PEI registered in 2007, 690 were Provincial Nominees; out of a total of 1,483 immigrants to PEI in 2008, 813 were provincial nominees. (Baldacchino, 2009, Table 3). Around 5,000 more PNP beneficiaries may be expected to arrive on PEI over the next 3-5 years.

background) will not be divulged in this report. This is a function of the small number of respondents we are dealing with.

8. Comments and Concerns by Recent Immigrants: A – Refugees

Eight out of the nine interviewed refugee class immigrants had availed themselves of the Host Program at some point. All eight refugees expressed their appreciation for the Host Program and their gratitude to the Host volunteers. None of them has criticized the Program, or any aspects of its delivery. The refugees are all especially keen to emphasize the importance of the Program for the development of their language competence. They also explain that a Host can help them so much by virtue of being part of the local culture:

“It’s a very important program, especially when the volunteer is a Canadian or someone who knows the culture well” (R#1)²⁴.

“It really helped me a lot ... enabled me to join in sport activities, group meetings, visiting places, etc.” (R#2).

“All in all, the Program is commendable and I recommend it for every newcomer” (R#3).

“I really enjoyed the Host Program because the couple who got matched with my family was great. Especially, I really liked that the couple’s children would hang out with my children” (R#8).

These testimonials nicely complement the positive comments received by host program volunteers about their experience²⁵.

Only in one instance, however, did a respondent explicitly state that the relationship with the Host was one of ‘trade’, ‘give and take’ and of mutual cultural respect:

²⁴ The ‘R’ stands for respondent. Each respondent has been allocated a reference number (#): R#1-9 are refugee class immigrants; R#10-19 are other; and R#20-43 are the Korean PNP beneficiaries. The responses in some cases have been corrected for spelling and grammar, but only when the corrections were obvious. Otherwise, the readers of this report should expect quotations whose sense is clear, even though they may not be structured as well as they should. Text within square brackets [...] has also been sparingly added editorially to improve flow or to complete sentence construction.

²⁵ As, for example, by Nora Scales and Helen Cottreau, PEI host volunteers, and documented in the *Host Post* (on-line PEI ANC newsletter), Spring 2008 and Fall 2008 respectively. Downloadable from: http://www.peianc.com/content/lang/en/page/community_host.

“The Program is helpful because your host is always ready to offer help to you. The Program is good because through it I learned a new culture and the *Host learned from me as well.*” (R#4, our emphasis)²⁶.

Immigrants to PEI quickly realise how important contacts, references and local information is in PEI society; they therefore go on to suggest that a Host volunteer may be able and willing to offer such additional services that would help to “open doors” on the Island, and not just provide opportunities for English language training.

To the question - *From your experience and that of your household, which features of living on PEI were made easier by your participation in the Host Program?* – the refugee class immigrants responded as follows (see Table 2). Respondents could tick as many options as they felt applied to them. In all, 49 options were registered, selecting 14 different responses:

Table 2: Activities made easier, thanks to PEI Host Program (8 refugee class immigrant respondents)

making friends amongst Islanders	8
getting invited to people's homes	8
going shopping	7
making friends amongst other newcomers to Canada and PEI	5
learning/practising one of the official languages (EN/FR)	5
opening a bank account/securing a bank loan	3
finding/buying/renting a home	2
buying a car	2
meeting and getting to know the neighbours	2
joining a sport team	2
finding work	2
meeting and getting to know elected politicians (municipal, provincial or federal)	1
joining a church	1
other (Babysitting)	1
finding a school for my child/ren	0
joining a music, song, food or other cultural activity	0

²⁶ The nature of the Host-Immigrant relationship will be analyzed further below.

Of paramount importance in these respondents' minds is meeting the key challenge of social integration: making friends amongst Islanders and getting invited to Islander homes secure the highest, maximum score (8 out of 8). Sometimes, it is just an opportunity for socialisation; or an opportunity to practise the English language:

“The friend was so helpful in matters that require language competence” (R#1).

But it is also an appreciation of how important connections are in this small island community; and how easy it turns out to be able to live on PEI and yet not ‘fit in’:

“It is very important to have a friend or someone that you are familiar with since such a friend acts as a bridge to becoming part of the society” (R#5).

“It is very important since it helps to find someone who can keep company, be a friend and enable connection to culture” (R#1).

The understanding that the host volunteer is a member of the host culture suggests that immigrants are not as well suited to serve as Host Program volunteers themselves. However, there are different reasons as to why immigrant Host Program volunteers may be beneficial:

“Most immigrants need to be encouraged to take part in the Host Program, particularly those who have managed to settle, since they will be good role models for the newer ones” (R#5).

Almost as important as the Host Program experience as a vehicle for social integration on PEI is the opportunity to go shopping with a local. Managing the sheer size of department stores; the calculation of displayed versus actual price of commodities²⁷ (which are generally not negotiable); handling cash; the secure usage of credit or debit cards; the general manner of consumer behaviour (addressing cashiers and shop assistants, use of trolleys and shopping bags, looking out for special offers, rain checks, redeeming vouchers, refund policies, ...) are all very culture specific to North America.

The main recommendation of these refugee respondents is to expand the remit of the Host Program beyond basic language competence.

The refugee respondents see no direct connection between retention rates and the Host Program. The two main reasons for immigrants coming to PEI and then deciding to

²⁷ Unlike most jurisdictions around the world, the marked prices of commodities on PEI are not equivalent to their final price to the consumer, since they need to have sales taxes (both PST and GST) added.

move on and settle in another province are, they claim, the lack of employment opportunities on the Island and the impossibility of connecting with their ethnic and linguistic community:

“Reasons for people leaving are all related to work and finding community from our homeland” (R#1).

However, there is a suggestion that the Host Program may wish to consider expanding its mandate to facilitating one of these two problems: the securing of employment:

“Although I really enjoyed the Host Program with great people . . . I really want to work, but there’s not enough opportunity to get a job here, as a come-from-away. I felt that it’s a bit hard to break into this Islanders’ community as a come-from-away . . . Even my children, who speak English fluently and are very smart youngsters, didn’t get a job . . . If the Host Program and volunteers could help ‘come-from-aways’ to getting a job or sharing information, not just helping social activities, I think that would be much better and many ‘come-from-aways’ would be happier with that” (R#9).

The opportunities for language training and practice are also perceived to be quite basic in some cases:

“Though the Host was always available, most language conversation is basic and not in depth” (R#4).

As another suggestion, more than one volunteer could be matched with each immigrant family:

“If possible, depending on the needs and size of the families, there should be more than one volunteer for a family. This would help meet the needs of everyone in the family” (R#3).

9. Comments and Concerns by Recent Immigrants: B – Korean PNP Beneficiaries

Immigrants from South Korea now represent the second largest national category of PNP beneficiaries in Canada, and has also become the second largest national category of immigrants to PEI in recent years (both after the People’s Republic of China). They have already been the targets of focussed inquiry and research in other contexts²⁸.

²⁸ A session examining a recent influx of a comparatively large number of Korean immigrants in Moncton NB, was organized at the Atlantic Metropolis Annual Spring Retreat, held at the

According to the 2001 Canadian Census, the Korean population in Canada was counted at 101,715. This figure is a 56% increase from 64,840 Koreans as counted in the 1996 census. Like other immigrant groups, Koreans are heavily concentrated in a few select provinces. According to the 2001 Canadian Census, 1.8 million new Korean immigrants entered Canada during the 1990s and nearly 90% of these resided in Ontario and British Columbia. Korean immigrants comprised 2.8% of the Canadian population according to the latest (2006) census.

Despite their advanced education and middle class backgrounds, most Korean immigrants to Canada are still at an early stage of economic adaptation, and do not fully utilize their human capital in Canada, largely because they experience difficulties in finding an occupation in the Canadian labour market commensurate with their education and training (Yoon, 2006: 17-19).

Since one of our student research assistants was herself Korean, the opportunity was taken to undertake such a focussed analysis: this was probably the first time that a particular ethnic/linguistic group was targeted for immigration-related research on PEI. 24 responses were secured from this group, consisting of PNP beneficiaries who moved to PEI from Korea since 2007.

However, and as an indication of the extent of the linguistic problems that this group (and others) may be facing, the survey questionnaire was translated by our research assistant into Korean. Only one of the Korean respondents chose to stick to the English version of the questionnaire and to answer its questions in English²⁹.

Only 8 of these 24 Korean respondents (one third) availed themselves of the Host Program. Among the 16 who did not, and answered the questionnaire, were some who offered various insights into the reasons for this lack of subscription, which tend to be mutually reinforcing:

Need and relevance: many Koreans on PEI connect with other Koreans through their church and community connections. They depend on their co-nationals for any assistance, including those who have been here longer;

Fortitude and embarrassment: many Koreans on PEI may not like to show that they need help, preferring to struggle by themselves, rather than admit that they

Université de Moncton, in 2008:
http://www.atlantic.metropolis.net/events/AMC_Symposium_2008_Agenda_ENG.pdf.

²⁹ This also means that the responses to the survey were translated by the project research assistant into English from the Korean original in which they were first expressed or written.

are in need of some assistance. There is a culture of individual perseverance and resourcefulness;

Language barriers: many Koreans on PEI do not feel that they have enough proficiency in English to be able to entertain any relationship with a Prince Edward Island Host volunteer. Their main and regular interaction with locals appears to be during their participation in English training classes, as with Study Abroad Canada (language school). Otherwise, they interact with their Korean co-nationals, encouraging a 'silo' and 'cultural mosaic' type of social development; and

Planning to leave: for Koreans on PEI, there is hardly any point in trying to settle and integrate on PEI if the Korean family is planning on leaving the island province anyway, typically within two to three years of having arrived here. The family's main reasons for coming to PEI in the first place (as PNP beneficiaries) include those of experiencing a "faster" or "easier" immigration process into Canada. The Koreans refer to the better social atmosphere and better educational system in Canada as main inducers for migration: these are not specific to PEI, especially the latter.

Here are some statements that capture these sentiments:

"I wondered how much it [the Host Program] would be helpful. I didn't feel it would be really necessary" (R#42).

"I usually got help from the Korean people that I've met in the Korean church, or else just winged it!" (R#23).

"We usually get help from Korean immigrants who've been staying here longer than me" (R#37).

"My English is still not good, so I am afraid of trying something with Canadian or native speakers" (R#25).

"Have not connected with others except Korean people because of language problems" (R#27).

"I have some Canadian and Chinese friends, but it is a little bit hard to keep a close relationship with them because of language barrier" (R#31).

"I was afraid of trying the Host Program because I knew that I wouldn't communicate with them well" (R#38).

"I just tried to learn by myself" (R#41).

Only one respondent expressed a sensibility that Korean immigrants to Canada and PEI should be more proactive in trying to fit into their new culture:

“I think immigrants here have to try and adapt to a new lifestyle... Immigrants’ perspective or attitude to a new life here should be changed. I think they still seek a Korean life style, which does not fit into a lifestyle in Canada” (R#36).

Judging from their limited responses, the Korean immigrants are both more instrumental and more critical in their assessment of the value and benefits of the Host Program than the refugee class respondents. Other than the opportunity to practise their English, and to make friends with a local family or other immigrants – opinions which they share with refugee class survey respondents – the Koreans who availed themselves of the Host Program also identify the practical benefits of the program in: finding work, getting to know some of the local politicians, joining a club, and navigating the local health care system (see Table 3). In all, 21 options were registered, selecting 9 different responses.

Table 3: Activities made easier, thanks to PEI Host Program (8 Korean PNP immigrant respondents)

learning/practising one of the official languages (EN/FR)	5
making friends amongst Islanders	4
finding work	3
making friends amongst other newcomers to Canada and PEI	2
meeting and getting to know elected politicians (municipal, provincial or federal)	2
getting invited to people's homes	2
finding a school for my child/ren	1
joining a music, song, food or other cultural activity	1
other (familiarity with health care system)	1
finding/buying/renting a home	0
buying a car	0
going shopping	0
opening a bank account/securing a bank loan	0
meeting and getting to know the neighbours	0
joining a church	0
joining a sport team	0

The Koreans are appreciative of the Host Program, and of its generous volunteers who make it all happen. For them, it provided an opportunity to improve their English proficiency and get some insights into Canadian/PEI culture. For example:

“It was helpful for improving my English” (R#30).

“It was good to have opportunities for learning Canadian culture and making new friends” (R#35).

“It might be very important because of not enough information to share language barrier, or some unfamiliar customs” (R#20).

“Since many immigrants don’t speak English well, the Host Program can be an important bridge for learning, and practising, English” (R#33).

However, the Korean respondents claim that their Host Program experience could have been even more helpful. There are two main broad suggestions for improvement being tabled here. Firstly, a plea for better matching, especially in terms of: polyglotism³⁰, training in the provision of language training, and family background:

“It was good, but it would be better if we were matched with volunteers who had children that were of the same age as my children” (R#34).

“Since many immigrants don’t speak English fluently, I hope there are more volunteers from various countries” (R#43).

“They were usually kind and friendly, but they spoke too fast with small voice, so it was hard to understand right away when we had a conversation” (R#32).

“Better to educate volunteers so that they offer a better opportunity for learning to immigrants; particularly, the level of English of volunteers is different, so sometimes it is hard to get close to them” (R#32).

“When the ANC matches the volunteers and immigrants, they should consider what immigrants expect from the volunteers. If something in common was considered, such as hobbies or interests, that would be much better” (R#34).

Secondly, there are various recommendations for expanding the mandate and scope of the host volunteer-immigrant interaction such that it would include other forms of settlement and integration support. In particular, the Koreans expect their Host volunteer to be more broadly knowledgeable on the settlement experience. Not

³⁰ This refers to the use of many languages by the Host Program volunteer – not just English (or French); but preferably also one of the languages spoken by the immigrant.

altogether a fair and realistic expectation, perhaps; but the host volunteer-immigrant relationship seems to have tended to stay bogged down in terms of language practice:

“I think these volunteers are great people, but they don’t have enough knowledge of helping immigrants in terms of very practical information for living” (R#26).

“We need to be offered more information about job or business” (R#30).

“I was very looking forward to meeting my partner from the Host Program, but it was not much helpful ... I think the volunteer was not ready to help me. They need to be educated how to help immigrants” (R#33).

“I tried to get some information for helping my friend who wanted to immigrate to PEI, but it was a little bit hard to get useful information” (R#43).

“Personally, these Host volunteers need to learn more about immigrants before they start their volunteer position. Some volunteers may be good; but some of them may be not. Since immigrants usually have a very high expectation to their new life here, volunteers and the PEI-ANC should make the Host Program or any other program for immigrants in a better way” (R#20).

“I think what the PEI-ANC is doing is very important. In my case, I got many help from the PEI-ANC workers for planning my own business here, which was really good” (R#26).

“[We] need to be provided with more information for living” (R#35).

“Currently, the PEI-ANC categorizes [PNP] immigrants and refugees as the same group when they pair them with volunteers. I don’t understand [this]... PEI-ANC always says there is a long waiting list to get paired with the volunteers; but usually refugees get more help easily from the PEI-ANC” (R#20).

A few similar statements are echoed by Korean respondents who did not use the Host Program, for example:

“I need to share more information and to be offered a practical guideline about many things, especially policy and social welfare systems, as they are very different from what I was used to in my country” (R#40).

“Host Program covers only a little part of all the complex issues” (R#37).

“I hope they make a better and more practical program for immigrants” (R#39).

“I think these organizations or programs are really significant. If there are many difficulties related to language or culture here, it is really hard to deal with those problems on our own. These immigration-related organizations or programs would help immigrants adapt to a new place and culture by offering a more enjoyable experience” (R#31).

“Immigrant-related organizations and programs, such as the Host Program, are really important for adapting to a new place and culture, especially if it can be a guideline to a new life here” (R#29)³¹

The 24 Korean immigrants had various other comments to make; overall, they were both more articulate than the refugee respondents; as well as more similar amongst themselves in the thrust of their commentaries³². Their comments can be grouped under four distinct yet inter-related headings.

In terms of volume, the first and by far the more strident criticism and concern is that levelled at the overall management of the PNP by the PEI authorities. This study has come in the wake of some controversial statements concerning the manner in which this Program – and especially its investor class stream, as regulated until September 2008 - has been managed by the PEI Government. While it is not the scope of this study to discuss the PNP in any detail, the interviewed Korean immigrants voiced considerable disappointment with regards to the PNP in this study, and they expressed reservations and suspicions against the PEI government and those who may have been associated with the management of the PNP. This issue may have reasonably affected any readiness they may have initially had about settling on the island province; as it may also have affected those PNP beneficiaries who still have to make it to the Island. These are some of the Korean respondents’ comments on this subject:

“[There is a need for] (a) sharing information about job/business as well as offering a training program; and (b) making PNP better and showing everything clear, especially deposit-related issue” (R#27).

“I don’t understand why there is no deposit back from the PEI government to those immigrants who have been staying here for at least 3 years... everyone knows it’s hard to get a job here; that’s why my husband decided to stay in Korea to keep his business. If my husband were here with us for the last few years without any job, how would we support ourselves? ... Considering the

³¹ Some of these requests for additional ‘practical information’ could easily have been instigated by the controversy surrounded the PNP – as is further discussed below.

³² This may also be a function of the fact that all Korean interview scripts were translated into English by the same research assistant.

[PNP] issue, I really mistrust the PEI government, and I think many immigrants have the same idea as me” (R#24).

“I have a deposit that I need to get back from the PEI government” (R#23).

“The PEI government has to use the investment from immigrants for immigrants, by offering [them] a better job or business opportunity. I think that’s the best way that may convince immigrants of considering settling down on PEI” (R#43).

“The immigration policy has [been] changed every year here by the PEI Government, which is ridiculous. The PEI Government should integrate all the revised immigration policy to make it a trustworthy policy” (R#20).

Second is the concern with educational opportunities, especially for their children. Korean society is driven very strongly by achievement status; so much of this is seen as dependent on excellent, quality university level education. The Korean respondents are themselves gifted with considerable tertiary-level education: In fact, no less than 22 out of the 24 Korean respondents have an undergraduate or graduate university degree:

“[I moved to Canada because of] better job opportunity and educational atmosphere for my children” (R#28).

“[I moved to Canada] for a better life and my children’s education” (R#25).

“[I came here] for a better education for my children. I like PEI, but I think the educational system here is not great” (R#39).

Third, and closely aligned to the above, is the desire to secure satisfying employment or self-employment that is commensurate with their skills, experience and credentials:

“Not enough job opportunity on PEI” (R#21).

“I am trying to get a job here” (R#23).

“[We] need more job opportunity and related information and training” (R#31).

Fourth and lastly, most Korean immigrants to PEI are not planning to stay for long in the island province. Their sour experience with the PNP may have aggravated this, but most appeared to have planned to come to PEI just for the short term anyway:

“I’m not sure about my future plans. I am still trying to figure out what I should do in the future. I guess I’ll be here for about two years” (R#40).

“I have been here for around 1 year, and I’m leaving next month” (R#36).

“I haven’t decided yet. I’m trying to dig more information now, but it will be to a bigger city in Canada” (R#39).

“I want to get a job, or run my own business here to settle down, but it seems to be very hard. I will decide whether I leave or not after I try [harder] to stay here” (R#37).

“[I plan to go to] Vancouver. I think there are many Korean connections [there] so it seems to have more job or business opportunities” (R#38).

“There’s not enough Korean connections here [on PEI], such as lack of Korean food or lack of Korean culture. Therefore, I’m planning to move to western Canada, probably Vancouver, which has more Korean connections. I have been on PEI almost 2 years so far, and probably I am leaving after I more year of staying” (R#31).

“Vancouver. ... My husband will run his business there” (R#25).

“Toronto. My children used to study [there], so they’re familiar with that city... understanding and accepting diverse cultures would be the key to living in Toronto, as it’s a big city with a lot of different people from many countries” (R#24).

“Not enough job opportunity on PEI. Planning to leave [to Toronto] in one or two years” (R#21).

“I am planning to leave in a year” (R#32).

“Toronto: I think there will be better opportunities for my job and my children’s education [there]” (R#33).

Those Korean immigrants who have not expressed a clear intention to leave are those who are waiting until their children complete their current educational program on PEI – typically, at high school – before they make longer-term plans.

Not a single one of the 24 Korean immigrants interviewed in this study – whether having gone through the Host Program or not – *expressed a clear intention or desire to remain settled on Prince Edward Island.*

Again, the educational progress of their children is a paramount consideration for Korean immigrants in determining where they choose to resettle:

“What we decide to do will depend on my children’s further education plan. If my children go to a university in another city, we’re moving there together” (R#22).

Perhaps what follows below is the most elaborate and articulate comment provided on this subject:

“I think many immigrants on PEI ... don’t consider PEI a place to settle down. Many immigrants, including my family, are more likely to be considering PEI like an entrance, or just a stop-over place before they settle down in other cities in Canada... Many Chinese people usually leave in a year, regardless of anything ... they even don’t spend a lot of money for housing or any house wares ... I think Korean people stay here for at least 2 to 3 years” (R#24).

10. Comments and Concerns by Recent Immigrants: C – Others

The final category of survey respondents is a mixed collection. There are 10 respondents, of whom: two immigrated to Canada on the basis of the skilled worker program; the other eight were all PNP (but non-Korean) beneficiaries. Only two of these respondents used the Host Program, while a third was herself a Host Program volunteer.

In their diverse responses, there are clear similarities with the other two sub-sets of respondents. The two respondents who used the Host Program appreciate its benefits:

“I would say it is an excellent program and ever since my wife got a Host [volunteer] she was able to improve her English language skills. We also learnt much about PEI culture ... through visits and social events” (R#12).

“My Host volunteer has always been kind to me and helped me learn a new culture and improve my language” (R#11).

Most of the 8 (Non-Korean) PNP beneficiaries admit that PEI was their Canadian province of choice because of the ease and speed of entry afforded by the PNP:

“[Coming to PEI] is an easier way to come to Canada, and the investment is cheaper than any other big cities, like Vancouver or Toronto” (R#14).

“There were a lot of options to immigrate to Canada – Quebec and other places were considered earlier - but I chose PEI because I thought the PNP would be the best program for me (the investment and finances [required] were small)” (R#19).

“First considered Nova Scotia ... [but, on PEI] PNP is faster, and I preferred [moving to a] small town” (R#13).

They are also just as keen to leave and re-settle elsewhere in Canada:

“I am leaving at the end of July: going somewhere near Vancouver where I can contact my clients better” (R#18).

“I will move somewhere else after graduation from UPEI next year” (R#17).

“I like this place, but still trying to figure out what we’ve got to do and where we will be moving later” (R#13).

“[I am planning to settle] somewhere else” (R#14).

One of the respondents, a Chinese immigrant, explains in more detail why so many immigrants to PEI re-settle elsewhere in Canada after a short spell on the Island:

“People have moved here and left. First, because this is a small province and there are not many opportunities for employment. [Second,] those who were used to life in big cities find it difficult to settle in a small community like here. [Third,] people tend to go near where friends or relatives are. In my mother’s case, she moved to Vancouver because she needed to be near some of her senior friends from China. Other factors may have to do with availability of ethnic food. Here, some items have to be shipped in from out of province; whereas, in larger cities, oriental markets exist and it is very easy to locate items needed” (R#11).

Only one of the two skilled workers interviewed manifests some willingness to settle on Prince Edward Island; and again, only if the right job opportunities should present themselves:

“I am trying to stay on PEI as possible as I can, which means that if I can’t find a suitable job, I might move to another city in Canada or possibly and temporarily to my home country” (R#16).

The 8 non-Korean respondents who migrated to PEI through the PNP also had some strong words, and advice, about the PNP:

“PEI Government has to show everything clear how they used the immigrants’ money... PNP is just paperwork and not a reality ... PNP needs both capital and human resources. I think they have both, but I think PEI Government doesn’t know how to use them. It’s a big waste. That’s why a lot of people leave here” (R#19).

“There is no explanation how the PEI Government used the money from immigrants. There’s nothing for immigrants. PNP is like a deal, a ‘trading’ between PEI Government and immigrants” (R#13).

“I went to the Government, but never heard anything from them at all. They were not interested in my issues. ... They said they would help me. ... I tried to get my deposit back; but I only got a pile of papers; nothing. ... my level of trust in Canada and Canadians has become very low. I [definitely] do not want to recommend PEI to anyone for immigration. Also, I think the PEI Government used the immigrants’ money in the wrong way. ... Also know PEI government doesn’t care whether [we] leave [PEI] or not” (R#18).

The respondents also had some concerns about the services of the PEI-ANC. These include an understanding that access to the Host Program could be improved via a wider dissemination of its existence and value:

“There are many services for refugees, but not enough for immigrants” (R#13).

“PEI-ANC should send some letter including some information about the [Host] Program, because I did not know [anything] about the Program” (R#16).

“If I knew [about] the Host Program, I would like to do that” (R#19).

“Currently, there are not so many people [who] know [about] this program” (R#15).

“I think the PEI-ANC is doing good work; but what they are doing is not very helpful for real issues that immigrants get through” (R#18).

11. Discussion

This research project set out to explain the relevance and connection, if any, of the Host Program to immigrant retention rates on Prince Edward Island. On the basis of 43 interviews, 19 respondents (44%) had some association with the Host program offered on PEI by the ANC: 18 of whom used it as clients, while another respondent was herself a Host Program Volunteer.

From the computed responses there is *no* indication that participating in the Host Program improves immigrant retention rates on PEI. Involvement with the Host Program has been much stronger with refugee class immigrants – 8 out of 9 in our survey sample – and they are much more appreciative of its benefits and value in improving linguistic proficiency and establishing some new friendships with the local community. But refugee class immigrants to PEI are decidedly in a minority – nor do they exactly ‘choose’ to come to PEI - and this situation is not likely to change any time soon.

In contrast, PNP beneficiaries are now the vast majority of immigrants to PEI and are likely to remain so over the next 3-5 years at the very least. They have – certainly until September 2008 - opted to migrate to PEI mainly for strategic reasons relating to ease, speed and level of required financial investment. Their uptake of the Host Program has been low: just 10 out of 32 PNP beneficiaries in our sample. They see less benefit in taking any initiatives to integrate with the host society, when their long-term plan is to leave for larger cities where they can connect with their relatives and friends in their own ethnic or national diaspora, partake in ethnic food, speak their native language, share in ethnic feasts and events, and place their children in what they consider to be better schools. PEI is just a convenient stepping stone, a “stop-over place”. The controversy surrounding the handling of the PNP by the PEI Government may have sullied PEI’s attraction to immigrants, even for stepping-stone purposes. Any resort to the services of the Host Program by PNP beneficiaries seems to be driven primarily by the desire to exploit all avenues for gaining important information.

The contrast in the take-up, and assessment, of the Host Program between refugee class immigrants and Korean PNPs is self-evident from a comparison of Tables 2 and 3 above. Refugee respondents have ALL experienced the Host Program³³, have ALL experienced it through the friendship stream, and have deemed it to have had many

³³ Although we have only 8 replies from the 9 refugee respondents in this study (as reported in Table 2), the missing respondent is known to have experienced the Host Program (friendship stream).

benefits, especially social ones. In contrast, the Korean PNPs are more select, instrumental and pragmatic in what they got from the Host Program, *if they use it at all*. They engage with it through the ESL stream; and their key driver is understandable: achieving language proficiency is absolutely necessary for them to get back a \$20,000 language deposit (part of the conditions attached to securing immigration into Canada as a provincial nominee). See Table 4:

Table 4: Activities made easier, thanks to PEI Host Program (Refugee class and Korean PNP immigrant respondents compared)

8 out of 9 Refugees		8 out of 19 Korean PNPs
8	making friends amongst Islanders	4
8	getting invited to people's homes	2
7	going shopping	0
5	making friends amongst other newcomers to Canada and PEI	2
5	learning/practising official language	5
3	opening bank account/securing bank loan	0
2	finding/buying/renting a home	0
2	buying a car	0
2	getting to know the neighbours	0
2	joining a sports team	0
2	finding work	3
0	getting to know elected politicians	2

Meanwhile, and in spite of the glaring differences between the profiles and motivations of refugee class and PNP (mainly investor) class immigrants, the two sub-sets manifest a similar, low immigrant retention rate on PEI: around 28% are still here approximately two years after landing in the island province. Almost all those that remain on the Island are living in Charlottetown. And so, one cannot attribute low immigrant retention rates on PEI to PNPs just because they feel that they have been treated unfairly by those who run the PNP.

Judging from the responses, the rationale for using the Host Program may need to be revisited. Although seen, and used, primarily as an opportunity for practising English,

the Host Program also offers a structured opening into the host society via the host volunteer. A look at the composite responses to the benefits of involvement with the Host Program suggests that there is an interest in broadening the mandate to provide the immigrants with more useful settlement tools. (The only largely practical activity that is selected most often is assistance with the shopping experience.) The primary intentions of the Host Program are recognized and appreciated by practically all the respondents: they should of course be maintained; but, in the context of the way PEI society works, these could include: introductions to other Islanders, politicians, potential employers and socio-cultural organizations (see Table 5).

Table 5: Activities made easier, thanks to PEI Host Program (19 respondents³⁴)

making friends amongst Islanders	16
learning/practising one of the official languages (EN/FR)	14
getting invited to people's homes	13
making friends amongst other newcomers to Canada and PEI	10
going shopping	8
meeting and getting to know elected politicians (municipal, provincial or federal)	4
joining a sport team	4
joining a music, song, food or other cultural activity	4
buying a car	3
opening a bank account/securing a bank loan	3
meeting and getting to know the neighbours	3
finding/buying/renting a home	2
finding a school for my child/ren	2
other (babysitting; familiarity with health care system)	2
joining a church	1

Contacts matter, as immigrants very soon find out. Many of these initiatives may be happening anyway, but are largely unstructured, haphazard and dependent on host-immigrant convenience and serendipity. Perhaps they can be incorporated more officially within the mandate of the Host Program, and the volunteers advised accordingly?

³⁴ These are: the 8 refugee class respondents, whose opinions appeared in Table 2; the 8 PNP class Korean respondents, whose opinions appeared in Table 3, and the opinions of 3 additional PNP (non-Korean) respondents.

12. Focus Group Reactions

The Focus Group which met on October 8, 2009, in Charlottetown, was exposed to the contents of this report and to a presentation of its main results. They were invited to respond to three specific questions.

A: The Host Program and Immigrant Retention on PEI

- What is the link, if any, between Host Program experiences and immigrant retention on Prince Edward Island? How well does the Host Program serve as ‘community broker’, facilitating immigrant settlement on Prince Edward Island?

The Host Program volunteers (HPVs) acknowledge that they have seen some of their clients obliged to leave PEI and settle elsewhere in Canada. Immigrants have had to move, even though they may have been fully immersed in island life and its social activities while they lived on PEI. The HPVs shared the feelings of frustration that many immigrants to PEI face when they realize that they are unable to obtain employment here, let alone *meaningful* employment commensurate with their expectations, work experience and/or credentials:

“[As a Host volunteer], you can do anything you want; but without a job, they [immigrants] are not going to stay [on PEI]” (HPV#1).

“The members of my client family have all found jobs – but in cleaning ... If you don’t speak the language, you can’t get a job, other than a menial job” (HPV#5).

“My match was a lawyer in his home country, but he knows that will never be a possibility here. He is trying to improve his English enough to be a bus driver” (HPV#6).

“Once, an immigrant friend went to a hotel to look for a job and the person at the front desk automatically asked: ‘Are you looking for a housekeeping job?’” (HPV#6).

Apart from the struggle to find – preferably suitable - employment, HPVs also elaborated on the real difficulty of immigrants breaking into the tightly-knit island community. It may take a very long time – if ever - for immigrants to feel somewhat comfortable in the company of an HPV’s friends:

“Even though they [my friends] were welcoming, there was no connection [with the immigrant]. My client told me that he would never be an islander. He eventually went on to Toronto” (HPV#2).

“On PEI, this [integration] is hard to do because we are very homogenous ... so homogenous that we don’t have ghetto-ization” (HPV#3).

“[This is a] very closed community on PEI. They [immigrants] come from bigger communities, so it is hard for them.” (Research Team Member #1).

The difficulties are compounded when immigrants lack English language proficiency:

“As much as you befriend them, if they can’t speak English then they can’t find a job and so they drift to bigger cities where they can find more of their own” (HPV#3).

“If all the newcomers could speak English and get a job, they would stay” (HPV#3).

The HPVs also commented on how one is more likely to find an immigrant him/herself acting as an HPV than a full-bloodied islander; just as those HPVs who are ‘come-from-aways’ explained that it was easier for them to make good friends with other CFAs than with islanders:

“All our good friends are themselves from away” (HPV#5).

The key advantage of having a CFA HPV is, of course, the demonstration effect: such immigrants can act as role-models to newcomers. However, are they the right ‘hosts’ if newcomers need help to engage more closely and deeply with the local community and its very powerful networks? CFA HPVs would lack the ‘power tools’ necessary to break effectively into PEI society:

“I left PEI when I graduated because I did not find a job here. I came back and found it hard to find a job even though I am an islander. It’s not your qualifications which count as much as to push for your job. So, if I – as an islander – have had to do that to get a job, then what does a refugee, or a PNP person, have to do to get a job here?” (HPV#4).

“I have a Korean student [as my client]. Bottom line: he needs a job and I would like to see him successful . . . [but] the majority of jobs are gone before they are posted” (HPV#4).

“I sometimes feel that I am no better than the person I am helping; because I am myself not an Islander” (HPV#1).

“I managed to get an equivalence to my professional certification before my job search. But Islanders got the job before I did” (HPV#7).

It appears that English language proficiency and suitable qualifications are necessary but still not sufficient to land immigrants suitable employment on PEI. The bonding social capital of the Island society will ensure that its own will be rewarded and employed first:

“It is not just about language. If there is a job vacancy, islanders will share this information usually with other islanders and not with someone coming from away” (Research Team Member #1).

B: Broadening the Host Program Mandate?

- How can Host Program Volunteers on PEI improve the immigrants’ settlement experience? Should the Host Program mandate be broadened: to cover such areas as facilitating introductions, developing networks and networking strategies, and securing jobs? And, if yes, how?

Clearly, the incoming wave of PNP ‘investor class’ immigrants to PEI – mainly from China, Korea and Taiwan - will be taxing the Host Program’s ESL stream. HPVs can already see the frustration building up when PNP immigrants cannot achieve that “moderate” level of proficiency in English which would allow them to recover their \$20,000 language deposit³⁵. Other immigrants also manifest some interest in social goals, but language proficiency remains the top priority for PNP newcomers – especially since most of them are planning to leave anyway. The small size of the province, with all the implications in terms of being unable to serve as ‘a home away from home’, makes retention difficult:

“If you don’t have a connection to the place, you are never going to stay. You cannot make a connection between here and home. Immigrants tend to compare PEI to their [former] home, which makes it difficult to integrate.” (PEIANC Host Worker #1).

³⁵ See CBC News (2009) for some evidence of this.

If you don't feel part of the community, this becomes a stop-over place" (Research Team Member #1).

"I have heard many refugees express dissatisfaction from their experience in Canada. They have huge needs and there is more that the Host Program could do to serve them" (HPV#1).

For those immigrants interested in settling down on PEI (a significant minority of PNP 'investor class' immigrants, who are - for now - the largest category of immigrants to PEI), the suggestion is to move beyond language proficiency: from an activity that is exclusively pedagogical, to one that facilitates an understanding of how the island society works. In all cases, the interests of the client must be considered:

"It is an individual thing: some want English, and some want the living and friendship thing" (HPV#4).

One must also acknowledge that not all those who need the Host Program will register for it:

"Sometimes, just because they come through the PNP, immigrants think that they do not need any help because they have enough money and they have high qualifications" (Research Team Member #1).

C: Delving into the Host-Client Relationship

- How would you define your relationship as a Host Program volunteer with your Host Program Client(s)? Is it largely an equal (peer) relationship or an unequal one? What are the effects of this?

Judging by the fact that Canada is notionally a diverse and multi-cultural society (e.g. Biles *et al.* 2008: 3), one would expect multi-cultural encounters to be typically equal, peer-to-peer, or 'give and take' relationships, where both parties gain, learn, trade and profit from the encounter. Such interactions would be very different from those where the HPV is seen as the more powerful member, and where the relationship is therefore one of largely one-way assistance and guidance. The distinction is schematically described in [Table 6](#):

In the case of the PEI HPVs, some acknowledge that the purpose of the match was a give and take situation. This peer-to-peer relationship is more likely to occur under the friendship stream:

“I wanted to be matched with a Spanish speaking immigrant. In my mind, I wanted to help my client with her English, but at the same time I would be learning some Spanish” (HPV#9).

Table 6: Equal versus Unequal Host-Client Relationship: A Schematic View

<u>Equal</u>	Host-Guest	<u>Unequal</u>
Friend/Brother/Sister	Attitude to Host by Client	Parent/Provider of Assistance
Friend/Brother/Sister	Attitude to Client by Host	Dependent/Requiring Assistance
Mutual Trade / Exchange	Nature of Relationship	Dependence/Support
Long Term	Long-Term Prospects	Instrumental/ Short Term

And so, another outcome of the PNP immigrants and their pursuit of the Host Program for mainly, or strictly, ESL tuition makes an unequal, instrumental relationship more likely:

“People coming through the PNP are only concerned with securing their English language proficiency requirement. One can only [?] beyond that depending on where the client may want to go and if you are compatible with your match” (HPV#2).

My match and I have an institutional relationship. I consider myself to be friendly and outgoing, but I do not feel a friendship and networking experience as much as an institutional relationship” (HPV#8).

Still, transitions from one kind of relationship to another are possible:

“I started off on the unequal side with my match; but it quickly went on to the equal side and we became friends.... That being said, my friend still relies on me for assistance on a weekly basis” (HPV#2).

The current structure of the ESL Program remains driven by pedagogic objectives. Any pursuit of friendship and partnership between host and client in this context seems only possible ‘by stealth’:

“There is lots of theory made available at the ESL course; but it lacks practical advice about any parameters for the tutors... The ESL training did not cover issues relating to the more social aspects, usually related to the Friendship stream. I have developed a friendship [with my match] but I was unsure what the parameters should be in terms of friendship. Maybe the Host Program should be giving us some ideas of what we could or should be doing outside of regular ESL training ” (HPV#6).

13. Conclusion

The Host Program has been a very successful entry-level experience for many immigrants, especially when it comes to basic language acquisition and an introduction to Canadian society, both through the selfless generosity of Host Program volunteers:

“Volunteers can be the first networks for people coming from away, their first friends, very important for them for providing first impressions” (Research Team Member #1).

There may now however be significant scope to consider broadening the mandate of the Host Program to cover aspects of social life that are just as significant to immigrants on PEI.

First, while it is likely that the Host Program continues to be construed primarily as a vehicle for the development of friendship, social support and/or basic linguistic proficiency, there is some concern that the experience should be developed into a broader, socially situated practice. For this purpose, the opportunities for expanding it into a mechanism for tapping social networking and identifying employment

opportunities should be actively explored, and aspects of this function incorporated into the training of HPVs³⁶.

Second, it is just as likely that the parameters of the Host Program are premised on an understanding that it is the immigrant participant who is expected to assimilate and learn the host culture. There is no expectation of a frank cultural exchange on equal power terms, between host volunteer and immigrant. It is worth asking whether such a principle needs to be interrogated. While Canada professes to be a tolerant multi-ethnic society, Host Program praxis appears more driven by integration and assimilation. It may be worth asking here what motivates Host Program volunteers to kindly offer their time, interest and friendship to immigrants. Are they interested in and open to a frank cultural exchange on equal, peer-to-peer terms (where, for example, they can 'trade' language acquisition)? Or do they rather see themselves in an inevitably unequal relationship (where they serve as surrogate parents or patronising benefactors to the immigrants, rather than 'friends'?)³⁷ Are the immigrants themselves interested in moving away from such skewed power interactions and dependencies?

Third, given that a proper understanding by immigrants of PEI society, beyond either friendship or language proficiency, may only be possible via an Islander host, then host volunteers who are themselves immigrants – for all their generous enthusiasm and kindness - may however *not* be the best suited for this role. While their ability to act as role models is appreciated, they would however realistically not be as fully able to impart that rounded settlement experience that newcomers to PEI may need, including that key 'community brokerage' function.

We encourage the PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada, as well as other settlement agencies especially in Atlantic Canada, to consider these reflections as they continue to review and improve upon their Host Program delivery.

³⁶ A similar suggestion was one of the recommendations of a country-wide evaluation of the Host program commissioned by Citizenship and Immigration Canada: CIC (2004).

³⁷ Such an attitude may be inspired by Christian charity. Given the importance of church-driven immigrant refugee support certainly on PEI, this point may call for further research.

14. Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Atlantic Metropolis Centre for having favourably received our project proposal and made \$5,000 available for this pilot study. We thank the Board, Executive Director and Staff of the PEI-ANC for facilitating this research study from beginning to end. We thank Anna Baldacchino and Naomi Arron for taking detailed notes during the Focus Group Meeting on October 8, 2009. We also wish to acknowledge the most useful conversations we have had at UPEI with Bobby Cameron (UPEI graduate and history major who has been researching the representation of immigrants in the PEI media over recent years) and Erica Stanley (staff member, International Office, UPEI).

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Annexes:

Phase One Information Letter and Consent Form (3 pages)

Phase One Questionnaire (3 pages)

Phase Two Questionnaire (3 pages)

Phase One INFORMATION LETTER: Launching a Research Project to study the role and significance of the **Canadian Friend Program** (or **Host Program**, or **Padrino/Madrina**) amongst Immigrants who arrived in PEI in 2006.

Date: _____, 2009

From: Joe Seaman and Julie Houde, PEI – Association for Newcomers to Canada

To: Newcomers to Canada who arrived in Prince Edward Island in 2006

Dear Newcomer to Canada,

We hope that you are well and in good health.

The PEI-ANC is cooperating with the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) to carry out research on the social experience of immigrants who arrived in PEI in 2006. We hope that you accept this invitation to participate freely in this study.

The study is being conducted by Dr Godfrey Baldacchino and Dr Lisa Chilton, both professors at UPEI, as part of a study facilitated by the PEI ANC and supported by a research grant of \$5,000 kindly provided by the Atlantic Metropolis Centre. Please contact either Dr Baldacchino [tel: (902) 566 0909; e-mail: gbaldacchino@upei.ca] Dr Chilton [tel: (902) 566 0692; e-mail: lchilton@upei.ca] or Lynn MacPhee at the Office of Research and Development [tel: (902) 566 0637; e-mail: lmacphee@upei.ca] all at UPEI, should you have any questions or concerns about this study.

The **purpose** of this study is better understand the importance of the Host Program as one that is intended to enrich the friendship and social networks in the immigrant experience; and whether such friendships and social networks help immigrants to stay, or stay longer, on Prince Edward Island after they arrive here.

The **resources** for conducting the study are being provided to the researchers by Atlantic Metropolis Centre. 'In Kind' contributions are provided by UPEI and the PEI-ANC.

The **benefits** of participating in this study include: (a) articulating your immigrant experience; (b) sharing your immigrant experience with that of other immigrants who moved to PEI at the same time as you; (c) contributing towards a better, and more informed understanding of how friendship and social network support initiatives can help newcomers settle on PEI. You will also be invited to attend a meeting (free of charge) to be held in Charlottetown that will announce the results of the study in which you have participated.

The **costs** of participating in Phase 1 of the study consist in the time (around 15 minutes) and inconvenience it may take to reply to a brief survey, which has 8 questions (see below). The **costs** of participating in Phase 2 of the study consist in the time and inconvenience it may take to participate in a 30-minute interview: the exact time will depend on your willingness to go into detail. We are expecting some 100 participants to take part in Phase 1 of this study.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to participate, or to withdraw at any point during the study, or to refuse to answer any question, all without any negative consequences on yourself or anyone else. Should you choose to withdraw from the study, we will ask you whether you wish for any data that relates to you and which you may have already provided for the purposes of this study to be destroyed and deleted from any memory banks or computer files.

This study is anonymous: this means that your identity will be protected, since we do not require to report as to who said or experienced what. Moreover, the data gathered from respondents will be treated with the utmost confidentiality: it will be collated in a database from which only generic statistics will be derived, and tabulated by such variables as: age, gender, religion, country of birth, educational and occupational background. The UPEI researchers in charge of this study guarantee that they will ONLY use the data that you provide in this study in the context of a report to Atlantic Metropolis Centre; this report will contain the research findings from this study.

Any interview scripts will be held by Dr Baldacchino in a locked filing cabinet, held in a secure location. They will only be checked in relation to this research exercise and any necessary follow-ups. All interview scripts and any other related survey data will be destroyed after 5 years (that is, by September 2014).

It is planned to make the results of this study public in February 2010. This would be announced through suitable media at the appropriate time. An electronic copy of the final report would be made available, free of charge, to anyone interested.

We at PEI ANC believe that this is an important study, since it will allow us to evaluate the Host Program and its contribution to helping newcomers settle down on Prince Edward Island.

Thank You. If you require any further details about this study, do not hesitate to contact us at the PEI-ANC: (902) 628 6009.

Joe Seaman

Julie Houde

CONSENT FORM

I have been invited to participate in a Research Project entitled: The Role and Significance of the **Canadian Friend Program** (or **Host Program**, or **Padrino/Madrina**) amongst Immigrants who arrived in PEI in 2006.

- I have been provided with a copy of the Information Letter about this study.
- I have read and understood the contents of this letter, or have had the contents of this letter explained to me.
- I know that I have the freedom to withdraw from this study at any time.
- I know that I have the freedom to refuse to answer any question.
- I understand that the information I will provide in the context of this study will be used strictly and exclusively for the purposes for which it is being collected.
- I understand that I can contact the Research Ethics Board at the University of Prince Edward Island – by contacting Lynn MacPhee at the Office of Research and Development [tel: (902) 566 0637; e-mail: lmacphee@upei.ca] – if I have any concerns about the conduct of this study.
- I understand that I can keep a copy of this signed and dated consent form

NAME: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____ (day) / _____ (month) / _____ (year).

The role and significance of the **Canadian Friend Program** (or **Host Program**, or **Padrino/Madrina**) amongst Immigrants who arrived in PEI in 2006.

PHASE 1 QUESTIONNAIRE

First, please READ the INFORMATION LETTER and the CONSENT FORM.

If you are comfortable and ready to proceed, kindly answer the following questions. You can do so by filling in the empty space, or by ticking the correct box with ' X '

1. Your Age in Years: 18-30 31-45 46-60 More than 60

2. Your Gender: Male Female

3. Country of Birth: _____

4. Last Country of Residence before coming to Canada: _____

5. Highest Level of Education when you arrived in Canada:

(Please choose ONE of the following):

Primary/Elementary School

Secondary/High School

University/ Technical College

(please continue)

6. Your Status when arriving on Prince Edward Island in 2006:

(Please choose ONE of the following):

Provincial Nominee (PNP Beneficiary)

Refugee

7. Since you arrived on PEI in 2006, how did you live for most of your time?

(Please choose ONE of the following):

Alone

With family (including children)

With family (but without children)

With friends

8. Did you, or a member of your household, make use of the **Canadian Friend Program** (or **Host Program**, or **Padrino/Madrina**) during the first weeks or months after you arrived on PEI?

YES

NO

If you answered NO to Question 8, this concludes the survey.

If you answered YES to Question 8, we would like to invite you to take part in Phase 2 of the study. This will involve a 30-minute interview during which we will discuss your experience with this Program. The interview will have 10 questions – they will deal with such issues as: what aspects of the Program did you enjoy most; whether and how it contributed to your decision about staying or not staying on PEI; and how the Program could be improved for future newcomers to PEI. *(The exact interview questions can be provided to you in advance, should you so wish.)* The interview can be conducted face to face in a location and timing of your choice, or over the phone, or else the questions can be answered in writing, preferably in English.

This exercise will be carried out by a trained UPEI student, under our close supervision. It is likely that interviews will be scheduled between May and August 2009.

Whether written or spoken, all your comments will be treated with full anonymity and confidentiality.

If you answered YES to Question 8, AND wish to take part in an interview (as described above), kindly indicate your name, e-mail address, phone number and mailing address where we can reach/contact you:

Name (Please PRINT): _____

Mailing Address: _____

_____ Postcode: _____

Phone Number: _____ E-mail address: _____

I would prefer to have my interview conducted in: _____ (Indicate one or more languages of your choice, if not English).

Kindly return this completed questionnaire, either by e-mail to gbaldacchino@upei.ca, or by mail to the address below, in the stamped and self-addressed envelope provided, preferably before March 31, 2009.

Thank You so very much. Do you have any questions? Is there anything that you wish to have clarified, or explained in greater detail? (Please let us know)

Godfrey Baldacchino

Lisa Chilton

Mailing Address: Host Program Study
Dr Godfrey Baldacchino –UPEI
550, University Avenue
Charlottetown PE C1A 4P3
Tel: (902) 566 – 0909.

The role and significance of the **Canadian Friend Program** (or **Host Program**, or **Pardino/Madrina**) amongst Immigrants who arrived in PEI (2006-7).

PHASE 2 INTERVIEW TEMPLATE

First, please READ the INFORMATION LETTER and READ and SIGN the CONSENT FORM.

These are the questions we would like to discuss during our interview. If you prefer, or feel more comfortable and better able to articulate your response, you can write out all, or part of, your answers to any of the questions. *(If you prefer not to reply in English, we can translate your answer, if necessary.)*

Please feel free to provide as much detail as possible to each answer.

1. When did you arrive on Prince Edward Island (PEI) for the first time?
2. Why did you come to settle on PEI?
3. How did you decide to connect with the **Canadian Friend Program** (or **Host Program**, or **Pardino/Madrina**)?
4. From your experience and that of your household, how important was this **Host Program** to your settlement experience on PEI? Why? Why Not?
5. From your experience and that of your household, what in particular about the **Host Program** did you appreciate most? Why?
6. From your experience and that of your household, what in particular about the **Host Program** did you enjoy least? Why?

7. From your experience and that of your household, which features of living on Prince Edward Island were made easier by your participation in the **Host Program**? These features can include the following (*please tick all those, and only those, that apply to you*):

- finding work
- finding/ buying/renting a home
- buying a car
- going shopping
- opening a bank account / securing a bank loan
- making friends amongst Islanders
- making friends amongst other Newcomers to Canada and PEI
- meeting and getting to know the neighbours
- meeting and getting to know elected politicians (municipal, provincial, or federal)
- finding a school for my child/children
- learning / practicing one of the official languages (English / French)
- getting invited to people's homes (including holiday meals)
- joining a church
- joining a sport team
- joining a music, song, food or other cultural activity
- any other? (please describe): _____

8. What suggestions or recommendations would you have to those who run the **HOST Program**, with a view to make it more effective?

Thank You so very much!

Do you have any questions? Is there anything that you wish to have clarified, or explained in greater detail?