

# Subject: The Changing Immigrant Experience in Canada

**READING  
TEXT**

## **The Weekly News Editorial**

by Roberto Keskin

Welcome to Canada, a land of immigrants. While some Canadians can trace their family's history in Canada back more than a hundred and fifty years, this is the exception, rather than the rule. More commonly, a Canadian family's history in Canada is less than a hundred years old. Immigrants have come to Canada not in steady numbers over the years but in large waves that correspond to Canadian and world events. The first big wave of immigration occurred in the 1880s and 1890s when the completion of the trans-Canada railway opened up western Canada to people who wanted land to farm. The next two waves of immigration occurred at the start of the twentieth century and just after World War I, when people were looking to start new lives in a land far away from the long and complex history of Europe. There were several more waves of immigration in the years after World War II with peaks occurring every ten years or so. The latest large wave of immigration occurred in the 1990s, with high immigration numbers continuing through to today.

In the past, even though immigrants did not speak English or French, they could still carve out a good life for themselves. Success in a rural farm setting, in a construction trade, or in a restaurant or bakery, did not require high levels of English or French. These settings required a willingness to work hard, together with determination and perseverance. Most immigrants had these qualities. In recent years, however, success has become harder and harder for immigrants to achieve. Changing immigration patterns, along with a more sophisticated knowledge and communication-based work environment have made the immigration challenge even more daunting.

Immigrants are no longer settling in Canada's rural areas. Instead, they are heading to urban Canada. An astonishing 94% of the people that have arrived since the 1990s have settled in Canada's urban areas. Since 1991, Canada's cities have been straining under the weight of more than 1.7 million new immigrants. But, the statistics reveal something more riveting. The vast

majority of the new immigrants have settled in only one of three metropolitan areas: Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Together, the big-city trinity attracted nearly three-quarters of the newcomers. Toronto claimed 43%, or 792,000 people, while Vancouver collected 18% and Montreal 12%. Only a relative handful -- 108,000, or 6 per cent -- settled outside Canada's 27 largest metropolitan areas. So while Canada's suburban and rural areas are desperately seeking skilled labour and looking to enhance their communities with more multicultural colour, Canada's cities are bursting at the seams with new immigrants from around the globe. Immigrants are more inclined to settle in cities because of the abundance of jobs, and because of ready-made ethnic communities that make them feel more at home. But there's a trade-off. Social workers fear that the different ethnic communities foster segregation that erodes racial unity instead of fortifying it. However, evidence is appearing that the more ethnically diverse a place is, the more likely it is to attract more newcomers, and the less likely it is to experience serious racial tensions.

But were Canada's most populous cities prepared for this change in the immigrant settlement pattern? "My answer would be no, we were not," said Jane Rogers, the Executive Director of a local agency. The agency helps newcomers to one of Canada's urban areas do everything from find a job to file their taxes and access government services. According to Rogers, Canada's major cities need more federal money to fund the kinds of support services that help immigrants find work and learn language skills. Employment and language are the two critical components that immigrants must achieve in order to tap into their full potential. "Unless the federal government gives some serious consideration to the influx of immigrants into urban areas, they're going to find that they're not going to be able to deal with the issues that arise," Rogers said.

Unlike during previous waves of immigration, Canada's rural areas now *can't* attract enough new immigrants. They subsequently have an increasing lack of skilled labour and trained professionals. Ottawa is considering a number of incentives to lure immigrants out of the cities and into rural regions, including temporary work permits for qualified immigrants willing to spend three to five years in a smaller community. And some provinces, like Ontario, are working to more quickly accredit foreign doctors and nurses to alleviate a growing shortage of medical professionals in their more remote hospitals and clinics. In a range of professions, from engineering to medicine, the mad rush is on to ensure that job vacancies get filled by qualified

people who are already in Canada. Many immigrants, who have had tremendous difficulty finding jobs in their area of expertise because they lack Canadian experience or qualifications, hope that this new philosophy will help their lives considerably.

The pattern of urban settlement is not the only change that has affected immigrants. Employees now need more sophisticated language skills to meet the demands of a more complex work environment. Those immigrants *without* a sophisticated level of English or French rarely end up working in their field of expertise. "I could have gone to any country I wanted, but I preferred to come to Canada," said Vishwas Sawant, a 45-year-old father of four, who arrived here three years ago. "It is free of discrimination, people have nice behavior, the climate is nice, the country is full of freedom. These are the reasons I decided my family and I would come to Canada." Sawant spent 17 years teaching chemical engineering at a prestigious university before he came to Canada. Is Sawant teaching here in Canada? In fact, no. He works as a security guard in a hospital. Why? Employers in his field only hire people with experience working in Canada and with sophisticated English or French language skills. This, coupled with credentials from a foreign university, makes it difficult for Sawant to find a job in his field.

The dream of all immigrants is economic stability, as well as freedom. Are new immigrants up to the linguistic challenges of a complex work environment that demands a sophisticated understanding of English or French? Is Canada up to helping immigrants through the even greater challenges they now face?

*Find examples of COORDINATORS, APPOSITIVES and COLLECTIVE SUBJECTS.*

*Write a sentence with each of the following words and expressions.*

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|----|----------------------|-------|
| 1. | <b>TO TRACE</b>      | _____ |
| 2. | <b>EXCEPTION</b>     | _____ |
| 3. | <b>TO OPEN UP</b>    | _____ |
| 4. | <b>DETERMINATION</b> | _____ |
| 5. | <b>PERSEVERANCE</b>  | _____ |
| 6. | <b>SOPHISTICATED</b> | _____ |
| 7. | <b>TO SETTLE</b>     | _____ |

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|-----|------------------------------|-------|
| 8.  | <b>RIVETING</b>              | _____ |
| 9.  | <b>TO ENHANCE</b>            | _____ |
| 10. | <b>TO BURST AT THE SEAMS</b> | _____ |
| 11. | <b>TO BE INCLINED</b>        | _____ |
| 12. | <b>TO FORTIFY</b>            | _____ |
| 13. | <b>TO LURE</b>               | _____ |
| 14. | <b>TO ACCREDIT</b>           | _____ |
| 15. | <b>TO ALLEVIATE</b>          | _____ |
| 16. | <b>MAD RUSH</b>              | _____ |
| 17. | <b>PRESTIGIOUS</b>           | _____ |
| 18. | <b>CREDENTIALS</b>           | _____ |

*Answer the following questions.*

1. Why does the author say that Canada is a land of immigrants?  
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2. Why does the author use the word “wave” to describe the immigration patterns?  
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3. In the past, how did an immigrant to Canada achieve success?  
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4. Why were Canada’s cities not prepared for the number of immigrants they have received in recent years?  
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5. Why are many immigrants not working in their areas of expertise?

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6. What are the problems in Canada's rural areas?

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7. What are some things being done to solve the problems in Canada's rural areas?

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8. In your opinion, what other solutions are there to the immigration issues in both Canada's cities and rural areas?

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