Foreword

The Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council was established not only to help define the manner in which all residents and all sectors of the community should approach the issue of immigration but also as a means by which Hamilton can continue to be an immigrant-friendly and welcoming community.

As part of its strategic priorities, the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council has identified the need to generate and disseminate foundational information and to strengthen the settlement delivery system for newcomers. It is within this context that the following two papers become valuable contributions to our understanding of the settlement and integration process for newcomers to Hamilton. It is important to appreciate how the settlement process in the city is negotiated and experienced by newcomers.

These two papers also provide an assessment of the extent of support and the willingness and capacity of the voluntary sector and ethnic-racial communities in Hamilton, including faith and immigrant based groups and agencies in providing settlement support. This ‘informal settlement sector’ plays a vitally significant role in providing support and confidence to newcomers to our city and in the process serving to enforce and reinforce a sense of self-worth and belonging.
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PART ONE

Immigrant Settlement and the Informal Sector

By Sarah V. Wayland, PhD

Preface

Research indicates that newcomers most commonly turn to family and friends for advice and support upon arrival. Other types of informal social supports accessed by newcomers include supports from ethnic associations, religious institutions and faith communities and even from ethnic business owners.

A focus on informal support networks does not discount the important work done via publicly-funded immigrant serving agencies. Rather, it represents a more holistic understanding of the way the newcomers receive information and ultimately various forms of support. Also, as should become apparent in this paper, it speaks to the necessity of linkages between formal services and informal networks. There is urgency in ensuring that the information passed along to newcomers by family and friends is as helpful as possible. Information must be accurate, timely and complete.

Ideally, the informal and the formal support networks work in tandem with one another. To a certain extent, this already exists: Family and friends often make referrals to settlement organizations and more mainstream service agencies. In doing so, they act as “bridges” from an ethnospecific community to the broader society. The challenge is to strengthen those bridges and to make sure that they carry people to the appropriate supports.

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1 See data in next section; also Monica Boyd, Family and Personal Networks in International Migration: Recent Developments and New Agendas, International Migration Review 23 (1989): 638–70.
Introduction

Informal networks are crucial to the settlement experiences of immigrants and refugees, yet the academic and conceptual literature in informal networks is surprisingly undeveloped, perhaps reflecting the difficulties of conducting primary research on such a diffuse and protean topic. Renewed interest in social capital in the 1990s, including the introduction of the concepts of bonding and bridging social capital, caused scholars to pay attention to the importance of networks in immigrant communities as well.

The objective of this paper is to highlight the important role of informal networks found in places as disparate as ethnic associations, places of business and faith communities.

This paper is divided into several sections. The first section contains recent survey findings that point to the importance of the informal sector for newcomers. Section two describes some reasons why newcomers turn to informal networks rather than accessing formal settlement services. The third section contains a brief literature review on informal networks, with a particular focus on the role of social capital. The fourth section describes some of the types of informal networks that have served past and present immigrants. The final section contains a lengthy list of just some of the ethnic organizations, faith communities, student organizations and the like that form the informal settlement sector in Hamilton, Ontario.

1.0 Survey Findings on the Informal Sector

Two recent surveys of immigrants in Canada point to the importance of the informal sector, especially family and friends, in the settlement process. The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada sampled immigrants who arrived in Canada in 2000 and 2001 and interviewed them at three points in time after their arrival. The York Infrastructure Project was a survey in York Region, Ontario in which newcomers comprised one group of respondents.

Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC)

This survey was designed to provide information on how new immigrants adjust to life in Canada and to understand the factors that can help or hinder this adjustment. Topics covered in the survey included language proficiency, housing, education, foreign credential recognition, employment, health, values and attitudes, the development and use of social networks, income and perceptions of settlement in Canada.

According to the first wave of survey findings, networks of family and friends provided the most accessed support for recent immigrants, with 87% saying they had family, friends or both in Canada at the time of arrival. Among newcomers indicating that they had difficulty meeting their needs during the settlement process, only 11% chose to access settlement organizations to assist with housing, for example, compared to 63% who instead turned to friends for help. In the area of employment, 21% of newcomers who received help finding work accessed settlement organizations, while 62% indicated receiving help from friends, family members or other household members.

York Infrastructure Project
A recent survey conducted in York region found that only one in three recent immigrants were aware of and accessed settlement services in any form. The study measured awareness, use of and satisfaction with settlement services for recent newcomers, including language, housing, employment and counseling for immigrants who have been in Canada for less than ten years. The results indicate that most respondents used education services and one in six used employment services. Few immigrants used settlement services and the use of housing services was especially low. In total, one in three used some type of service and two in three did not use any at all. A total of 14% said they could not get services in the last 10 years.

Additional findings:

- Awareness decreased with income, increased with education and differed according to ethnicity;
- More females were users as were more university graduates;
- Business class immigrants did not really use services;
- Immigrants typically found out about available services from family and friends, none from places of worship;
- Respondents indicated that it is important for service providers to speak their language: Over 80% of respondents said that it is important to have agency workers speaking their mother tongue and 66% said it was the most important factor;
- In terms of satisfaction, most people who used services were satisfied, reporting an average ranging between “very satisfied” and “somewhat satisfied.”

When respondents were asked how they heard of the agencies named in the survey, families and friends were cited as the most important sources of information. This indicates that informal networks can act as a source of referral.

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to formal support networks. As noted by the authors of the study, “this confirms findings from LSIC as well as other research about the importance of social network or social capital in immigrant settlement and integration.”

In the concluding section of the report, the authors note:

Use of services is tied to awareness of services, yet awareness declines with income. This raises the question of how to make newcomers aware that services and help on settlement needs are available to them. Besides, many recent immigrants rely on their social networks to gain information and lodge assistance, which raises another question: Should more settlement dollars be allocated to developing bridging social capital? The concept of bridging social capital is discussed later in this paper.

2.0 Why Don’t More Newcomers Access Formal Settlement Services?

There are many reasons why newcomers may not access publicly-funded settlement services in Canada, many of which are beyond the control of service providers themselves.

Most obviously, newcomers may simply be unaware of settlement services. They may be unfamiliar with the extent of services available in a “welfare state” such as Canada. In a study of settlement services in the Greater Toronto Area, it was argued that settlement services are framed in a North American perspective and not in the context of the ‘users.’ Consequently, many newcomers enter Canada with a lack of knowledge that there are social services they can turn to for assisting them with their settlement process. This lack of knowledge can make the resettlement process for newcomers very challenging and stressful, especially if they do not speak English and arrive with limited financial resources.

Second, settlement services may not be accessible. Accessibility refers to how easy it is for immigrants to travel to and obtain services from service providers. It is affected by factors such as physical proximity, the availability of supports such as transit passes and childminding and service capacity. Using travel distance to measure accessibility, the York Infrastructure Project found that the areas of the

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5 Ibid., p. 116.
6 Ibid., p. 121.
8 Citing these reasons, the authors of the York Infrastructure Project study recommend extra efforts on reaching out to recent immigrants in a culturally sensitive way beyond the standard information/orientation package they are given upon landing. See Lo et al 2009, p. 123.
region with the largest number of vulnerable populations were underserved compared to other areas of the region. According to the authors, “For many recent immigrants (particularly those of low income), the expenses incurred in using public transit to reach service agencies may act as an access barrier, particularly in traveling across regions that require several fares.” For women with young children, the availability of childminding services can often make the difference between being able to attend an English language class or not. Other factors related to accessibility include having classes that can accept new students and counsellors that can fit more clients onto their roster.

A third reason that persons may not utilize settlement service relates to eligibility. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) funded programs have eligibility requirements attached, namely that most are available to permanent residents and Convention refugees only. Once immigrants acquire Canadian citizenship, they become ineligible for these services. This requirement adversely affects women who have childcare responsibilities during their early years in Canada and anyone who has to starting working immediately upon arrival in order to provide for their families. By the time these immigrants find time to work on their language and other skills, they may no longer be eligible for most settlement programs.

There are many other reasons why newcomers may seek assistance through informal networks. At a forum on immigrants, refugees and homelessness in Toronto, staff members at a home for refugees identified numerous factors that hindered the use of formal networks, including:

- previous experience of abuses of power (e.g., with immigration authorities) and the resulting fear of authority;
- settlement organizations that are too bureaucratic;
- experiences with incompetent or careless professionals;
- negative experiences of being judged or asked too many questions; and
- services that are too narrow in focus and do not meet the needs of those needing assistance.

Although service providers cannot always compensate for previous negative experiences, this finding does point to the need for service providers to provide a warm and welcoming climate and to treat their clients in ways that are both sensitive and culturally appropriate.

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3.0 Social Capital and the Settlement Process

Informal networks rely on various types of social capital, defined as the social networks that enable people to acquire resources. There are two principal types of these social networks. **Bonding social capital** refers to connections to people they can trust and fall back on in hard times, especially family and friends. **Bridging social capital** refers to links to people who can help them take advantage of society’s opportunities and rewards. Another body of literature refers to the role of “weak ties” as opposed to the “strong ties” that exist among family and close friends, particularly within an ethnic community.¹²

Both bonding and bridging social capital are essential to social and economic integration for newcomers.¹³ The initial success of immigrants lies in the depth and reliability of their “strong ties” or bonding social capital, and may include the concentration of immigrants in particular urban areas. Immigrants have long looked to members of the same ethnocultural community as a first reference point in a new land, and for almost as long, sociologists have examined how such ethnic ties have facilitated their adaptation and integration, especially where there were strong traditions of mutual aid.¹⁴

Research points to the importance of social capital for immigrants. For example, research on homelessness among immigrant and refugee populations in Toronto, Peel and Hamilton found links between homelessness and an absence of social capital.¹⁵ A study on the housing experiences of newcomers to the Greater Vancouver Regional District found that systems of ethnic resources and social capital appeared to help immigrants, refugees and claimants escape the worst forms of absolute homelessness.¹⁶ A Dutch study found that newcomers without an immediate social network may suffer to a far greater degree and far more frequently from dejection and depression, thereby adding psychological barriers to the search for employment.¹⁷

In a study of Central American refugee women in Montreal, Damaris Rose and her co-investigators explored their social networks and assessed how these

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¹² Damaris Rose, Pia Carrasco and Johanne Charbonneau. The Role of “Weak Ties” in the Settlement Experiences of Immigrant Women with Young Children: The Case of Central Americans in Montréal, CERIS Working Paper No. 4 (December 1998).
¹⁴ Rose et al., p. 3.
networks functioned as resource systems that the women drew on as they passed through different stages of settlement. Rose and her colleagues noted the lack of research on this topic, particularly among immigrant women:

Relatively little is known about the relative roles of formal support services compared to kin and friendship networks and acquaintances in immigrant women’s resource systems—although various generalizations and stereotypes abound, e.g. immigrants prefer to resolve all their problems within the family rather than use the social services system.¹⁸

Based on this qualitative study, they concluded that strong social networks rooted in family and close friends were indeed very important for “front line” assistance for new arrivals. Yet they also found that these networks were not necessarily sufficient in terms of their potential for diversified medium term social support, leading them to the provisional conclusion:

when immigrant women can build a diversified social support network out of both “strong” and “weak ties” … this may not only smooth their settlement and adaptation process and help set them on the difficult road to social integration but also may eventually open up new gateways and new horizons.¹⁹

Weak ties, or bridging social capital, can serve as a gateway to an array of socio-economic and cultural resources beyond those generally available in the person’s ethnic or immigrant community. They may also lead to the creation of new networks of strong ties. In this sense,

access to weak ties may become a key element in social integration processes because of their potential to open up access to a wider range of resources (e.g., for finding a job, resolving a family problem) thus facilitating an individual’s becoming more autonomous and less exclusively dependent on strong ties to a small, locally based and homogeneous community.²⁰

In brief, bonding social capital is necessary but not sufficient for long-term settlement and integration; this typically requires bridging social capital or the development of “weak ties” that creates more social and economic opportunities. Weak ties enable newcomers to branch out of low paying jobs, an essential step to increasing the economic returns on human capital.²¹ The significant disparities in the resources available within different immigrant groups make this a particular necessity in under-resourced groups.

¹⁸ Rose et al., p. 2.
¹⁹ Ibid., p. 23.
²⁰ Ibid., pp. 4-5.
²¹ Kunz, p. 34.
In sum, research has highlighted the importance of informal networks to the settlement experience and also indicates that strong ties and weak ties may have differing levels of importance for newcomers at different stages of the settlement process. Whereas the familiarity of intra-ethnic ties are important to newcomers in the first stages of adjustment to life in a new country, the formation of weak ties that bridge into the broader community can be important for latter stages of settlement, including the search for employment and integration into educational institutions. Increasing social capital among newcomers is essential to combating the loss of social and financial capital that often occurs in the migration process.

4.0 The Informal Sector: Past and present
What does the informal sector actually look like in Canada? In this section, some past and present ways that immigrants received supports from each other are described.

Ethnic Neighbourhoods
Historically, neighbourhoods provided a complete set of institutions in which members of some ethnic communities could live, work, shop, worship and socialize. First studied by William Lyon Mackenzie King in 1897, Toronto’s ethnic enclaves were home to Jews, Ukrainians, Italians, Chinese, Macedonians, and others. (Other groups such as Scots never had high levels of residential segregation.) Such neighbourhoods were places of commerce and also offered public spaces where family and friends could gather:

… to exchange collective wisdom about important decisions – sending for relatives from the old country, following work opportunities out of the city, moving out of the neighbourhood, improving a house or selling it, allowing a child to continue his or her education. The house yard was a place where hundreds of the small human decisions, which affected the city’s economy, appearance and culture, were made.\(^{22}\)

Through these networks – played out in corner stores, factories, churches, secular halls and the like – immigrants learned who to trust, where to seek assistance and what was useful about politics and government. In this way, they became actors in city’s history.\(^{23}\) Ethnic presses were also important means of spreading news and maintaining cultural cohesion.

Although neighbourhoods today may contain high concentrations of particular ethnic groups, the notion of the “ethnic enclave” is not as prominent, mostly because it is somewhat unusual for people to live and work in the same


\(^{23}\) Ibid., p. 13.
neighbourhood. Nonetheless, places of residence – be they neighbourhoods, city blocks, townhouses or apartment buildings – still provide a first point of contact between residents and their surrounding community.

**Ethnic Associations**

Prior to the creation of the publicly-funded immigrant serving agencies and the settlement sector of today, many organizations helped new immigrants adapt to life in Canada. Voluntary associations formed by ethnic communities were created to meet various settlement needs, provide services and information and create venues for contact with others of the same language and background. As communities became more established, many associations came to focus on perpetuating a particular language or culture or on overcoming various barriers. The proliferation of ethnic associations in the postwar period and the creation of new umbrella organizations were evidence of the varied education levels and experiences in organizations, the wide range of interests and backgrounds among newcomers to Canada and the preferences of various immigrant cohorts. With the rise of the welfare state lessening the need of mutual aid and philanthropic associations, ethnic organizations placed more emphasis on helping new immigrants access public sources of aid.

According to Burnet and Palmer, “Ethnic associations are usually composed of and led by immigrants… [they] are by and large immigrant associations.” Second generation immigrants tend to prefer activities that are not ethnically defined. As such, ethnic associations tend to follow a specific trajectory and to have a limited lifespan. Even if existing populations are supplemented by new waves of co-ethnic immigrants, new immigrants often prefer to create their own organizations rather than join existing ones.

Thanks to continuing immigration to Canada, ethnic associations thrive in many cities and communities. Within well-established immigrant communities such as Italians in Toronto, there are hundreds of social clubs that foster the sharing of information around employment prospects, pension benefits and other matters of interest. Newer, smaller organizations may lack the infrastructure of a meeting hall or even any budget, instead meeting in members’ homes and utilizing electronic networks such as websites and blogs to share information.

**Faith Communities**

Membership in a religious community can offer a powerful and immediate form of bonding social capital for new arrivals to Canada. In Kilbride and Webber’s study of immigrant homelessness in southern Ontario, they found a highly

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25 Ibid., pp.192-3.
26 Ibid., p.
organized Spanish speaking network in Peel Region that was rooted in religious ties:

… there are organized prayer groups that were designed to create a sense of belonging among members in the community and to help newcomers meet others. These social contacts were considered highly important as they created a community safety net. As an example, they mentioned a family that was going to be deported. They had taken their children out of school and left their apartment out of fear of the authorities. The community found them, fed them, gave them shelter and arranged legal representation for them. This community, moreover, is well known abroad; as an indication of this, the key informants have found that when a family new to the country arrives at the airport, they call the community’s priest, who has a group of volunteers pick them up from the airport. Since the priest already has a list of people who are offering a room or a basement, immediate housing needs are met.28

Kilbride and Webber go on to state:

Pre-existing community institutions like these religious communities are a logical source of support for immigrants, as they are places that they seek out shortly upon arrival. Key informants also mentioned that many newcomers are most likely to reach out to the religious organizations—churches, mosques, or temples—for help, because they are unaware of what social agencies or government workers can help them with. Questions that arise include how best to support religious communities in this work and how to identify similar sources of integrative community efforts for those who do not belong to any such supportive religious communities.29

The role of religious organizations in this regard can be far-reaching. American research on this topic claims that religious institutions build and sustain more social capital—and social capital of more varied forms—than any other type of institution in America.30

Certainly, the role of faith communities may vary between places of settlement (small town versus large urban area, homogeneous versus diverse, etc.) and characteristics of the faith community (i.e., size, leadership, settlement experiences of existing members, etc.). Though the research in Peel described above spoke to the importance of faith-based networks, the York Infrastructure Project did not find that faith communities referred immigrants to settlement

28 Kilbride and Webber, p. 100.
29 Ibid.
services. The role of faith communities in the settlement process deserves more research attention in the Canadian context.

5.0 The Informal Sector in Hamilton

This section contains a list of informal sector associations in the Hamilton area. It was compiled from listings in Inform Hamilton and various other websites. It is an incomplete list but it provides insight into the types and focus of associations whose membership is comprised of newcomers to Canada.

Inform Hamilton groups ethnic associations into different categories, for example:

**Cultural heritage groups**: Organizations that work for the preservation and promotion of the traditions, values and lifestyles of different cultural groups; organize activities and events which promote cultural exchange locally, regionally and nationally; and seek to encourage understanding and respect for different cultural heritages among youthful members of the group as well as the mainstream population.

**Ethnocultural/multicultural social clubs**: Organizations such as Sons of Italy that provide an opportunity for individuals who have a common cultural heritage to meet and socialize through dances, parties, picnics, barbecues, events for children and other companionable activities. Some organizations may also offer lecture series which address topics of interest to the membership or provide opportunities for involvement in charitable fundraising and other similar activities.

**Ethnocultural multipurpose centres**: Multipurpose centres that serve as focal points for specific ethnocultural groups within the community and which offer, at a single location, a wide variety of services and activities that are structured to meet the social, educational, economic, recreational and other needs of participants in ways that are culturally appropriate.

These categories have been modified somewhat to include other organizations such as student organizations at McMaster University and Mohawk College. Under categories such as “Faith communities,” only those that have an ethnic or national name in the title or represent a religion that was brought to Canada by more recent immigrant communities are included.

**Faith communities**
Gurdwara Sikh Sangat Hamilton
Hindu Samaj of Hamilton & Region
Bosnian Islamic Centre of Hamilton
Hamilton Mosque
Hamilton Downtown Mosque
Razavi Islamic Centre (Shia Muslims)
Wat Khmer Kampuchea Krom Buddhist Temple and Mediation Centre, Stoney Creek
First Filipino Baptist Church

**Ethnic associations**
Afghan Association of Hamilton
Arab Cultural and Heritage Centre
Assyrian Cultural Association of Canada
Croatian Fraternal Union of America Lodge 954
Czechoslovak Association of Czechs, Slovaks and Sub-Carpatho Ruthenians
Hamilton Chinese Community Services Centre
Hamilton Council of Canadian Arabs (The)
Hamilton Estonian Society
Hellenic Community of Hamilton and District
Immigrant Culture and Art Association
Jamaican Association
Salvation Army, Hamilton Laotian Corps
Shamiram Assyrian Association Inc
Somali Womens Network
St Georges Benevolent Society of Hamilton

**Community centres**
Afro-Canadian Caribbean Association of Hamilton and District Inc, Community Centre and Social Club
Arab Cultural and Heritage Centre
Armenian Community Centre of Hamilton
Canadian Japanese Cultural Centre of Hamilton
Hamilton Filipino Community Center
- This is the parent organization for all Filipino organizations and clubs in the City of Hamilton and surrounding areas. Any inquiries will be directed to the appropriate organization.
  - Filipino Canadian Association
  - Philippine Islanders Cultural Association of Hamilton
  - UST Alumni of Ontario - Hamilton Chapter
  - Philippine Basketball Association of Hamilton
  - United Filipino Canadian Seniors Association of Hamilton
  - Club Novo Ecijanos - Hamilton Chapter
  - BIBAK
  - Hamilton Filipino Club
  - Ato-Ato Club
  - Filipino Canadian Retiree Association of Hamilton
  - Filipino Association of Burlington

**Ethnocultural/multicultural social clubs**
Afro-Canadian Caribbean Association of Hamilton and District Inc, Community Centre and Social Club
Associazione Figlinesi
Associazione Nazionale Alpini Sezione Di Hamilton
Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation
Barbadian Canadian and Friends Hamilton
British Imperial ClubHamilton (City of)
Canadian Hungarian Senior Citizen Club
Canadian League of Ukrainians In Canada, Hamilton Branch Hamilton East
Centre Francais Hamilton Incorporated
Club de l'Age d'Or Notre-Dame
Community of Gagliano Aterno Social Club
Dutch-Canadian Legion
Estonian Seniors Club
Fondi Social Club
Fratellanza Racalmutese
German Canadian Benevolent Society for Aged Persons
Germania Club of Hamilton
Greek Ladies Philoptochos Society
Gruppo Dell'amicizia
Hamilton Croatian Centre
Hamilton Guyanese Canadian Cultural Association
Hamilton Holland Club
Hamilton Italian Recreation Club
Hamilton Malayalee Samajam
Hellenic Community of Hamilton and District
Irish Canadian Club of Hamilton
Irmandade Do Divino Espirto Santo
Italian Canadian Community Involvement
Jewish Social Services of Hamilton
Jewish Social Services of Hamilton, Seniors Club
Koyu Kai 60 + Seniors Club of Hamilton
Lassociazione Vicentini Di Hamilton
Lithuanian Senior Citizens Club (The)
Mutual Ethnic Senior Club
Na'amat Hamilton
Nineveh Assyrian Club of Hamilton
Order Sons of Italy of Canada, Roma Imperia Lodge
Order Sons of Italy of Canada, Trieste Lodge
Pan Macedonian Association of Hamilton and District
Polish Alliance of Canada, Branch 2, Ladies Circle
Reggina Social Club, Hamilton Branch
Riverdale Seniors Punjabi Group
Roseto Recreation Club
Sagar Pare Bengali Community
Santa Croce Di Magliano Association of Hamilton
Serbian Chetniks Ravna Gora, Hamilton Chapter
St Georges Benevolent Society of Hamilton
St Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church, Seniors Club
Sudanese League of Hamilton
Temple Anshe Sholom, Deborah Sisterhood
Trinacrian Sports Club
Ukrainian Cultural Centre
Ukrainian Self Reliance Association
Vasco Da Gama Portuguese Association

Student organizations
At McMaster University: (as listed in McMaster Student Union Directory of Clubs – Cultural category):

African Caribbean Association
Armenian Student Association (ASA)
Assyrian Chaldean Syriac Student Union (ACSSU)
Bangladeshi Student Association
Canadian Asian Student Society (CASS)
Chinese Students & Scholars Association
Filipino McMaster Student Association (FMSA)
German Club of McMaster
Global Understanding Through Nursing Initiatives
Gujarati Students Association
Hungarian Society
Jewish Students Association
Korean Students Association
Malaysian and Singapore Association (MSA)
McMaster Afghan Student's Association
McMaster African Students Association (M.A.S.A)
McMaster Association of Serbian Students
McMaster Bangladeshi Student Association
McMaster Chinese Students' Association
McMaster Croatian Society
McMaster French Club
McMaster Hellenic Society (MHS)
McMaster Hong Kong Student Alliance
McMaster Iranian Students Association (MISA)
McMaster Italian Association
McMaster Japanese Club
McMaster Language Exchange
McMaster Malayalee Students Association (MMalSAz)
McMaster Organization of Latin American Students
McMaster Pakistani Students' Association (PSA)
McMaster Palestinian Society (MPS)
McMaster Polish Society
McMaster Russian Association
McMaster Society for Iraq
McMaster Sri Lankan Association (MSLA)
McMaster Taiwanese Students' Association
McMaster Tamil Students Association
McMaster Ukrainian Students Association
McMaster Vietnamese Student Association (MVSA)
Pakistan Students Association (PSA)
Punjabi Association
Romainian Student Association at McMaster
South Asian Alliance at McMaster
Sudanese Students Association of McMaster (SSAM)
West Indian Students United

MSU Clubs – Religious category (those listed have an ethnic or national name in the title or represent a religion that was brought to Canada by more recent immigrant communities)

Ahmadiyya Muslim Students Association
Campus Association for Baha'i Studies
Coptic Orthodox Christian Association
Daniel Chinese Christian Fellowship
Hamilton Chinese Christian Fellowship
Korean Campus Crusade for Christ Agape Impact
McMaster Chinese Catholic Community
McMaster Hindu Students Association
McMaster Ismaili Students Association
McMaster Muslim Students' Association (MSA)
McMaster Sikh Student Association
MSU Korean Christian Fellowship

At Mohawk College, the Mohawk Muslim Association and Mohawk Chinese Association are registered clubs for 2009-2010.

**Political organization and participation**
Italian Canadian Community Involvement
Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Hamilton Branch

**Ethnoracial businesses, stores, and business organizations**
Almanar Food Market, 388 Concession Street, East 15th t.905 574-1010
- Owner Hussein Alfuraji is from Iraq.

**Ethnic media**
McMaster University CFMU 93.3 McMaster Radio
- This radio station offers emerging artists and alternative music, social issues programming, and programs by various community groups. Multi-
Cultural radio programming is mostly on Sundays. CFMU Radio offers programs in some of the major languages including: Armenian, Turkish, Latin, South Asian (Hindi Punjabi and Urdu), Sudanese, Greek, Polish, and Filipino.

Contact: James Tennant (905)525-9140 x 27208, Email: jtennant@msu.mcmaster.ca  Web: http://cfmu.msumcmaster.ca

Women's Press
- In June 2009, the Immigrant Women’s Centre launched the first issue of the Women’s Press: Hamilton Women, Raising Our Voices. The goal of this four-page newspaper is to create a forum for women in Hamilton – both immigrant and Canadian-born – to discuss issues important to them.

Contact: Kiruthiha at 905-529-5209 ext. 257 or Email: kkulendiren@stjosephwomen.on.ca

Different media in different languages
The following monthly, weekly, daily, print and web media share community news and businesses’ information with their ethnocultural communities in Hamilton and area:
- Afghan Post
- Akbaar-e-Pakistan
- Al Mughtarib -Arabic
- Alhayat Alarabiya -Arabic
- BALITA -Filipino
- Bizim Anadolu - Turkish
- Canadian Newcomer Magazine
- Canadian Srbobra
- CCL-Chinese Journal
- Cuvantal Romanesc - Romania
- Hamdard Weekly - Urdu
- Hamilton Jewish News
- Hellenic Hamilton News
- Latin News
- Ming Pao Chinese
- Mosaic Edition
- Pakeeza International - Urdu
- Pakistan Times - Urdu
- Presencia Latina -Spanish
- Punjabi Daily
- Urdu Times -Urdu
- Voice in Diaspora
PART TWO

The Informal Settlement Sector: Broadening the Lens to Understand Newcomer Integration in Hamilton

By William Shaffir and Vic Satzewich
Department of Sociology, McMaster University

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from interviews with persons connected with the immigration sector in Hamilton to better understand the role that religious institutions and ethno-cultural associations play in the settlement and integration of newcomers to Hamilton. The report’s key findings are as follows:

- A significant finding and one not unnecessarily unknown to professionals in the field, is that immigrant integration unfolds along various trajectories. In this regard, it is useful to recognize that ‘a one size approach’ to integration does not fit all.

- In order to make Hamilton a welcoming community for newcomers, it is important that institutions and organizations recognize and acknowledge the ‘culture shock’ that many newcomers experience upon arrival in Hamilton.

- Immigrant newcomers are far from passive recipients of the programs that are generated to assist in their adjustment. Instead they are best viewed as actively seeking out ways and means of coping effectively with the numerous challenges before them.

- It is important to distinguish between formal institutions and programs in place for immigrants and more informal associations and meeting groups towards which they turn to manage their transition.

- Informal networking activities initiated by immigrants and available and accessible through their ethno-cultural associations and informal groupings, meet both instrumental and expressive needs. Faith based institutions are particularly important in this regard.

- Newcomer frustrations with finding work commensurate with their skills, training and education pose a challenge to Hamilton’s ability to retain immigrants.

- Friends and family members who migrated earlier play an important role in encouraging newcomers to initially settle in the city. As part of a newcomer recruitment strategy, this resource should be tapped.
Introduction

The Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council has recently initiated an immigration strategy. The purpose of this strategy is to facilitate the "attraction, settlement, retention and economic participation of immigrants and the creation of a welcoming community for newcomers". This report aims to help contribute to the articulation of this strategy by focusing on the role that religious institutions and ethno-cultural associations play in the settlement and integration of newcomers to Hamilton.

In our research, we conducted 30 interviews in November and December, 2009 with persons variously connected with the immigration field in Hamilton. The sample included immigrants that arrived in Hamilton under a variety of immigration programs, professionals familiar with the immigration scene and leaders of churches and ethnic community associations. We are not under any illusions that we have thoroughly familiarized ourselves with the immigration picture for Hamilton. Indeed, the achievement of such familiarity was not our central goal in light of the short time frame available to us for this project. Indeed, drawing on a point we emphasized in an article we had previously published on immigrants in Hamilton, we sought to determine whether some of our conjectures about the need to broaden the understanding of the “settlement sector” to include religious institutions and ethno-cultural associations could be supported by additional and more systematically collected data.

To this end, our research was guided by five main questions:

- What role do religious institutions and ethno-cultural associations play in helping newcomers adjust and integrate into Hamilton society?
- What is the relationship between the formal settlement sector and religious institutions and ethno-cultural associations in the city?
- What are the factors that can help make Hamilton a more welcoming community from the perspective of immigrant recruitment and retention?
- How do newcomers experience and understand the barriers to integration that they identify?
- How do cultural differences and culture shock, shape the settlement and integration process?

We begin by providing some background information concerning immigration to Hamilton. Arriving, as they do, from foreign cultures, it is important to recognize their initial challenge is to contend with culture shock, ranging from attention to mundane issues to grappling with more abstract ones. Following a discussion of culture shock, we briefly examine the single, most prominent institution in

31 Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council, http://www.inform.hamilton.ca/record/HAM0925

Hamilton attending to immigrant integration – SISO – and in the process, identify a few concerns expressed about this institution by recent newcomers. We next turn to the heart of this report, identifying two informal institutions whose role in immigrant integration deserves more careful attention – religious organizations and ethno-cultural associations. Notwithstanding SISO’s extensive programming, it is within these non-bureaucratically structured venues in which newcomers’ accommodations take root and germinate and within which immigrants feel emotionally fulfilled and secure. The report also considers some barriers and challenges to recruitment and retention of immigrants that prevail in Hamilton that are deserving of attention. Following a brief conclusion, we offer report highlights and recommendations for consideration.

1.0 Immigration to Hamilton: The background

In 2006, the population of Hamilton was 504,559. The city made up 4.1% of the 12,160,282 total population of Ontario. What are some of the distinctive features of immigration to Hamilton?

- In 2006, immigrants made up 28.3% of the population of Ontario as a whole, but the proportion of immigrants living in the City of Hamilton was 25.4%, below the provincial average.
- In the period 2003-2008, Hamilton received only 2.6% of the 733,444 new immigrants landing in the province of Ontario. This appears to be well below the proportion one might expect given Hamilton’s share of the total population of the province.
- Compared to the rest of Ontario, Hamilton’s immigrant population tends to be “older” in the sense that the majority of immigrants in Hamilton have lived in the city for at least 15 years. As table 1 shows, nearly 66% of immigrants living in Hamilton in 2006 came before 1991, suggesting that the majority of Hamilton’s immigrant population have likely solved many of the immediate challenges associated with settlement and integration. Conversely, 34% of immigrants in Hamilton arrived in Canada since 1991. In Ontario as a whole, however, 45% of immigrants have arrived after 1991. One half of Toronto’s immigrant population came to the country after 1991. Even other medium sized second and third tier cities in Ontario have higher proportions of recent immigrants, immigrants coming since 1991, than Hamilton. In Windsor and Ottawa respectively 46% of newcomers have come since 1991 and in Kitchener, 40% of newcomers have come since 1991. This suggests that Hamilton has not been able to keep up with newcomer attraction in the way other Ontario cities seem to have been able to.
Table 1: Proportion of Immigrants who arrived before 1991 and after 1991, Hamilton and Selected Cities in Ontario, 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Per cent arriving before 1991</th>
<th>Per cent arrived After 1991</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchener</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
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</table>


- The leading places of birth among the most recent landings in Hamilton, 2003-2008 are listed in table 2. Table 2 shows that the single most frequent place of birth of recent immigrants to Hamilton is India, followed by China, Pakistan, the Philippines, Iraq, Columbia, the United States, Somalia, Afghanistan and Korea.

Table 2: Top Ten Places of Birth, New Landed Immigrants to Hamilton, 2003-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of Birth</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1697</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China (People’s Republic)</td>
<td>1620</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>1193</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1188</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>806</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia (Democratic Republic of)</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea (Republic of)</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
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</table>
A summary of some of the main demographic characteristics of recent newcomer arrivals between 2003 and 2008 is provided in table 3. It shows that:

- The majority of newcomers had at least some knowledge of English upon arrival to Canada, but that one third could not communicate in either French or English upon arrival.
- Over 70% of recent newcomers were of working age and over 40% were admitted through the Economic Class, suggesting they came to Canada on the basis of the skills and human capital they possessed.
- Nearly 40% of recent newcomers had a university degree upon arrival in Canada, with another 15% holding either a non-university diploma or trade certificate.

Table 3: Immigrant Arrivals in Hamilton, Selected Demographic Characteristics, 2003-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official Language Ability</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>62.1% (11,656) had at least some knowledge of English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5% (656) had knowledge of both English and French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4% (267) had at least some knowledge of French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.0% (6,184) could not communicate in either English or French</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Age Groups</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71.0% (13,328) were between 18-64 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.5% (4,963) were 17 years of age or younger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5% (472) were 65 years of age or older</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immigration Classes and Categories</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41.1% (7710) were Economic Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.3% (5127) were Family Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.5% (5916) were Refugees and Other Classes</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education Among 18-64 year olds</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38.4% (5113) had a university degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.7% (1422) had a non-university diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0% (662) had a trade certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.5% (4727) had secondary schooling or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4% (586) had no formal education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.0 Barriers to Settlement: A brief review of the literature

Previous research on newcomer settlement in Canada in general and in Hamilton in particular, has already identified some of the main barriers and challenges that newcomers face when it comes to integration. This research clearly points to the significance of language barriers, but also to barriers related to educational credential recognition, Canadian work experience and translating the skills and experience associated with jobs and careers prior to coming to Canada into comparable jobs and careers here in Canada.

Sarah Wayland’s report for the Joint Initiative of the Community Foundations of Canada and the Law Commission of Canada titled *Unsettled: Legal and Policy Barriers for Newcomers to Canada*,33 is based largely on research and interviews conducted in Hamilton. Wayland’s report focuses on the structural and policy-related barriers to settlement and integration identified by both newcomers and by those working within the broadly defined settlement sector. The report identifies six main institutional spheres within which barriers to settlement exist: the immigration process, the settlement process, employment, language education, health and housing. The report outlines the ways in which particular policies and practices within these institutional spheres pose legal and structural barriers to settlement. For example, certain aspects of immigration policy pose barriers to settlement. Family reunification processes are under-resourced and subject to delay and processing fees on family sponsorship applications are sometimes beyond the ability of low-income newcomers to pay. In the area of employment, the lack of Canadian experience, insufficient recognition of credentials earned outside of Canada and the lack of accurate information about working in Canada at the pre-migration stage hinder the economic integration of newcomers. In relation to language education, Wayland identifies the rules regarding access to language training programs as a barrier to settlement and integration. For example, refugee claimants, those awaiting the determination of their residency status and Canadian citizens, are not eligible for federally funded adult oriented English as a Second Language programs (Wayland, 2006).

These findings are echoed, in a different way, in the *Hamilton Skills Study*.34 The study collected information from a sample of one hundred skilled immigrants in Hamilton in July and August, 2009. The main purpose of the survey was to examine the attitudes of newcomers in Hamilton, their experiences of settlement and the reasons for their decision to come to Canada. The survey found, for

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example, that while 64 per cent of respondents found it “somewhat easy” or “very easy” to adjust to life in Hamilton, 36 per cent reported that it was “somewhat difficult” or “very difficult” to adjust to life in the city. Newcomers who reported having difficulty in adjusting to life in Hamilton, described difficulties stemming from many of the structural and policy sources identified in the Wayland report: lack of facility with the English language, feelings of isolation stemming from the separation from family and relatives and difficulties finding work commensurate with education and experience. Others reported difficulties with managing some of the more routine and everyday matters associated with living in a new city and culture: learning the system of one way roads in the city, figuring out bus services and schedules, finding an apartment, opening a bank account, understanding traffic patterns and of course becoming accustomed to the weather. These latter difficulties are likely to be transitory and are eventually solved, albeit after considerable frustration.

As a result of this and other previous research, researchers have painted a fairly clear picture of the many barriers and challenges that newcomers face when it comes to settlement and integration in Canada more generally and Hamilton in particular. Our research is not intended to reproduce these already well known findings. Instead, we are interested in understanding how newcomers go about trying to solve the problems, challenges and barriers they face when it comes to settlement and integration through their participation in various religious organizations and ethnically specific associations.

We conceive of settlement as a process where newcomers interact with a variety of individuals and both formal and informal organizations in order to live and work in a new country. Immigrant integration is a long term process that involves not just satisfying immediate instrumental needs such as finding work and housing but also the deeper emotional needs of feeling comfortable, a sense of belonging and welcomed by the wider communities within which one lives. We define the formal settlement sector as those organizations that receive government or foundation funding to provide services to newcomers. Settlement and Integration Services Organization (SISO) is one of the cornerstones of the formal settlement sector in the city, but this sector also includes organizations like St. Joseph Immigrant Women’s Centre, Circle of Friends for Newcomers, L’Association canadienne-française de l’Ontario, Centre de santé communautaire and Hamilton/Niagara and Mohawk College. We define the informal settlement sector as those organizations and institutions that are not funded by government or foundation resources but nevertheless play a role in the settlement and integration of newcomers.

Settlement services are provided to newcomers by various institutions and agencies in Hamilton, but it is also the case that newcomers are not simply passive recipients of these services. Nor are they passive victims of the various

35 This list is not exhaustive. Our research is not intended to provide a full catalogue of support provided to newcomers by the formal settlement sector in Hamilton.
kinds of barriers that have been identified in the literature. Newcomers have what social scientists call "agency": they have the ability to act and react and to change their circumstances and surroundings. As a result, we believe it is important to understand settlement and integration from the perspective of newcomers and the ways they go about solving the various challenges posed by the barriers they face in the course of living in a new city and country. Our focus in this report is on the ways that two sets of institutions within the informal settlement sector, faith organizations--churches, temples, gurdwaras and mosques--and ethno-cultural associations help newcomers solve the various settlement issues. Though these organizations are not formally part of the government funded "settlement sector" and though their main purposes and functions are not to provide settlement assistance to newcomers, they nonetheless play a key and oftentimes, unrecognized role in helping newcomers solve the challenges associated with settlement and integration.

3.0 Culture Shock: Adjusting to Canadian lifestyle

It is not uncommon for new arrivals to feel disoriented, uncertain, or even fearful when becoming immersed in an unfamiliar culture and immigrants to Hamilton are no exception. The term culture shock is used to identify such difficulties. However, the extent of their perceived disorientation is shaped by their experiences prior to immigration. An illustration from the data follows:

The first thing is a total shock when you arrive in Canada, a total shock. One, you are coming to a land where you typically know nobody…. The people you’ve lived with, the culture you’ve grown up into, you leave behind. So the first thing is this tendency of fear…. You’re asking, “Am I in the right place, in the wrong place?” The next thing is who to talk to? Because you have questions all the time…. (Refugee)

As the following quote reveals, everyday, mundane practices, taken as routine by established residents, can prove disorienting and unnerving to new immigrants:

Finding your way. There are so many stories of when I got lost in the city because I remember the first time we had to come to SISO and we got off at the bus at Gore Park and we had a map of where to find SISO but we couldn’t find the way. We were so close…. Finding out West/East, it was so confusing for me…. It took me one year to realize that from James Street and Main, you have to count 1 to go East and 1 to go West…. It took me one year to understand East and West from James Street. (Skilled Worker)

The experiences associated with culture shock require interpretation and evaluation. The concept of relative deprivation is useful here. As employed by
sociologists\textsuperscript{36}, it refers to a perceived disadvantage arising from some specific comparison. As such, it is not a person’s absolute standing that counts, but how they subjectively perceive their situation. Although all the new immigrants expressed frustration at the seemingly steep learning curve awaiting them in the new culture, those that reached Hamilton by way of a refugee camp, or even a series of them, situated the changes demanded by the new culture within their overall experience. For example, one individual, who spent three years in a refugee camp in Ghana, reflected:

No, it’s not hard because where we’re at there was a whole lot of people shouting out things…. Ya, so far, every country where I’ve been, people are very selfish and they don’t like people. That’s what you find it hard to get adjusted. Here [in Hamilton] everybody is free. If you ask a question, people take the time to answer you…. For now, I don’t see anything difficult yet…. I love everything about Canada. (Refugee)

Another individual, who arrived in Hamilton via Thailand, spent more than 20 years in several refugee camps, spoke about now having to learn to line up for buses, become familiar with fire safety regulations and engage in face-to-face interaction which, while uncommon in his culture, was commonly expected, in Canada. While mastering these skills required patience and concentration, they paled in difficulty against the backdrop of his refugee camp experiences.

When asked if there was anything specific about Canadian culture that proved to be particularly challenging, one respondent explained that Canadian politeness was occasionally problematic:

Yes, the particular challenge for me is sometimes we speak, but we have to make sure that when someone comes to meet you we have to make sure we say ‘hello.’ We don’t use that one. Sometime for Karen people, for the old people, it is a little bit of a challenge for them to…. Karen people don’t usually say hello. Canadians are a little bit more polite than Karen. (Refugee)

Learning the niceties associated with Canadian culture is not easy and sometimes it takes a poignant lesson to catch on. One individual remarked that he learned this the hard way. In his words:

They [his hosts] try to explain to me … before you go to someone’s apartment you have to make a call first. That is their, how do you say, privacy. But the first time when I went to their home I didn’t call them. I knocked at their door. They didn’t open the door. I know they were in there, in the house, but they didn’t open their door. It was amazing. Then I came back I made a call and they said, ‘I saw you outside but before you come to my apartment you have to make a call first.’ In the refugee camp,

whenever you want to go, you can visit anyone. They said that here in Canada, everything before you go, before you do, you have to ask permission. I got a big experience from them. (Refugee)

While language is often a big barrier to making Canadian friends, Canadian culture can also pose barriers. It takes a conscious effort to overcome the old ways of doing things. Some refugees found it difficult to break out of old cultural practices:

Normally in my culture, when we meet a stranger, different people, we dare not look towards their face. But almost all of my people do that. Before they came here, I taught them about, when you arrive in Canada and people talk to you, you have to make eye contact. But they don’t, maybe they forget. They dare not to do. (Refugee)

Settlement is also a two way street. Newcomers experience culture shock, but it is important that Canadian institutions also make minor accommodations to recognize cultural differences. Institutions in Hamilton do seem to be making an effort to ease the process of culture shock.

It is very hard for me because I have only one name. When I went to apply for social insurance, or to the bank, or to apply for permanent residence, they ask me for my last name and also for my middle name. But I only have one name. When I tried to explain, I said you can put the last name blank. It was hard for them to understand this. You have to learn a little bit about our culture. They let me keep the last name blank at the bank and the social insurance. I just have one name on my card. It was not hard to convince the bank to let me do this. In my culture we don’t have family name. (Refugee)

As immigrant newcomers settle in Hamilton, they inevitably come into contact with SISO – one of the main faces of immigrant settlement in the city.

4.0 The Centrality of SISO: One of the public faces of settlement services in Hamilton

Hamilton’s Settlement and Integration Services Organization (SISO) is a community-based organization that helps to mediate newcomers’ experiences and facilitates their integration, particularly through its Host Program. Mandated to “provide programs and services to culturally and racially divergent immigrant and refugee communities” in Hamilton and to enable “… all people to fully participate in the social, economic and cultural life of the society,” the organization claims to have achieved credibility and widespread respect for its professionalism and strong commitment to community. “We are driven in getting newcomer immigrants and refugees settled into the Hamilton area and for them
to feel at home as quickly as possible” reads a brochure about the organization.\(^{37}\) This is accomplished by providing a number of services pertaining to such areas as Settlement, Youth Services, Language Services, Volunteer, Social & Cultural Connection, Host Program, Employment, Customized Services and Cultural Interpretation & Translation.

SISO is the face of immigrant settlement in Hamilton. As one refugee confessed: “Without SISO, we cannot do anything. They are the main organization to take care of us.” Located near the downtown core of the city, but with office space in other parts of Hamilton, SISO proclaims:

> We understand the importance of cooperation to achieve mutual respect, inclusiveness, harmonious relations and effective participation in the community. We are making differences in the lives of refugees, immigrants and visible minorities in the Hamilton area….\(^{38}\)

Though the organization’s programs are aimed at assisting new immigrants integrate into Canadian society, its Host Program stands out in this respect. To counter the impersonal and bureaucratic nature of the immigration experience, the Host Program “… connects newcomers with volunteers in the communities, based on their shared interests, age, gender and profession.” Matched newcomers and volunteers meet regularly “… and together explore the fun ways of getting to know Hamilton and Canada better.” Designed to enable newcomers and volunteers to learn about and from, each other, the program connects new immigrants and refugees to Canadian families. One SISO official recalls the arrival of the first Liberian family in Hamilton and the emotional impact that this arrival generated, both for himself and for the head of the Liberian household:

> When we received our first family, a single mom with three daughters, she was placed at the reception hotel that we use on Main Street. I went to see her, to welcome her and I brought along a couple of people from our community, from the Host Program…. So we just went there and I said, “Welcome to Canada.” She stood and said, “Thank you very much. You are the first person in 15 years to welcome me and my family somewhere.” I asked her if she wanted to meet a Canadian family and she said, :Of course, I need that.” Eventually she became an ambassador of her community. (SISO employee)

Without exception, immigrants, religious officials and ethnic community leaders alike acknowledge SISO’s invaluable contributions. Representatives of this organization are typically the first contact people with whom immigrant newcomers interact upon arrival. Its welcoming arms are instrumental in shaping newcomers’ first impressions of their new community.

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\(^{37}\) Settlement and Integration Services Organization, n.d. *I Want to Live in Hamilton: SISO’s Programs and Services for Newcomers to Hamilton*, Hamilton.

\(^{38}\) Ibid.
Concerns about SISO

Despite the fact that no-one voiced serious dissatisfaction with the quality and range of services offered by SISO, several respondents expressed some concern that the organization’s expansion has led to the increasing bureaucratization of its services, leaving some of them to wonder whether some of its services might be better parceled out to ethno-cultural associations. For example:

But SISO is now a huge organization here and I think that before when it was a small organization they could give better service. They could work with the communities better than now…. Now if you take a paper and want to translate it, they will tell you to come after one week. This can be done with us here within one minute, or two minutes. (Ethno-cultural association leader)

And:

I used to be in touch with SISO a few years ago but now I am not in touch with SISO like before but I think a few years ago they were in a better situation than now. They were more active. Now they are saturated. They have become well known they have huge, the government gives them huge funding…. To me, they are under stress because they have different communities, they work with different communities, but they can do better. I hope they do better. (Ethno-cultural association leader)

The growing bureaucratization was occasionally viewed as impeding the organization’s abilities to meet newcomers’ specific needs and, instead, offering a “one size fits all” approach to programming. As one individual remarked:

SISO is good because everything you need you can find it here. But for me, as a skilled worker, when I came, I felt the treatment cannot be the same for everybody. I didn’t come here as a refugee. I was a professional back home. So what I would like to find is some kind of treatment, some kind of advice that could show me the way, the wider way. Sometimes you feel like they are showing you many, many, many things, but it is up to you to know exactly where to go. For us, we couldn’t find somebody to tell us what it means, if you want to get a license here in Canada. What is the best step? Which way to go? What is the best thing to do first? (Skilled worker)

Additionally, assistance from publicly funded institutions carries a stigma for some cultural communities, which makes it difficult to access bureaucratically organized services. Note the following from a respondent familiar with the immigration scene in Hamilton:
Immigrants tend to access social services less than mainstream community because of the stigma of taking public handouts. So they don’t do that. And they are supported more by family members which is also connected to the horizontal approach rather than the vertical approach. (Ethno-cultural association leader)

An official at a Sikh temple echoed this view:

The thing with the Sikh, in particular, they’re a very proud people. They don’t like to ask for help, they kind of see it as a bad thing. So that’s why you won’t see them at the Good Shepherd Home for charity…. They won’t ask for a handout. [Do many of the people get to SISO?] Not too many, very few. […] because they don’t want to be seen as asking] … that’s one of the biggest reasons.

Thus, more specifically, to the extent that such a stigma prevails, newcomers might shy away from SISO’s assistance. This led one individual to speculate about who approaches this organization: “What we may be seeing at SISO,” she observed, “are those that are having trouble.”

To be sure, the relationship between SISO and these other venues is symbiotic and, in fact, some of SISO’s programming is located in them. Conversations with newcomers focusing on their transition and how they coped with the challenges of everyday life, inevitably turned to the importance of the emotional bonds with co-ethnics that specific institutions facilitated. While services to newcomers offered through SISO dominate Hamilton’s immigration scene, it is sometimes easy to overlook the support the newly arrived gain by connecting with a religious institution or ethno-cultural association.

5.0 Informal Support Provided by the “Informal Settlement” Sector

Historically, the uprooting of immigrants led to the formation of ethnic enclaves as a response to their alien status. These enclaves tempered their transition from one culture to another, serving as a buffer against the strangeness of their new surroundings. More immediately, the insulation offered protected newcomers from unnecessary contacts with outsiders that usually proved to be a strained experience.

However, immigrant adjustment remains challenging. Immigrants are homesick in their distance from their familiar environment and are removed from relatives and friends left behind. Too overwhelming for the individual to cope alone, a collective adjustment becomes a most viable route with the assistance and in the presence of co-ethnics that share a comparable fate. From this sense of common fate, of having to face the same problems, there develops a subculture: “… a set
of perspectives and understanding about what the world is like and how to deal with it and a set of routine activities based on those perspectives."  

Not surprisingly, various institutions in the city are geared to assisting new immigrants in their transition. It is essential to recognize and even take advantage of, the informal services of religious institutions and ethno-cultural associations established by the immigrants themselves and the stabilizing role they play in providing much-needed emotional support and opportunities in helping newcomers find direction.

**Faith Institutions and Social Integration**

Generally speaking, immigrants arriving in Hamilton enjoy government-sponsored programs that would make earlier waves of immigrants envious. These services connect mainly to newcomers’ instrumental needs. However, faith institutions are consistently identified by newcomers as helping to fulfill their expressive needs. Providing spiritual sustenance and emotional comfort, these institutions morph into informal organizations offering guidance and networking opportunities to meet their concerns. As explained by an Imam at a local mosque: “Those who are coming, they trust the mosque more than other organization, because of that spiritual link. The mosque helps many of them find work.”

The particular blend of spiritual, emotional and instrumental support within the informal environment of places of worship is precisely what makes these institutions particularly significant vehicles to enhance settlement. As explained by one member of a non-denominational church in the city:

> Some people are lucky to have family here, but there are others who come here strictly on their own…. And there is trepidation when you come from a foreign country. You don’t know how to talk, how to express yourself and yet when you meet your own people and you talk, you feel more comfortable…. [The church], it’s accepting…. They come here because it is not formalized. It is not rushed. There are no exams. It’s like a free open school. It’s open 24/7. They can come here any time. (Church official)

The relevance of faith institutions for newcomers was underscored both by religious officials as well as immigrants. They are valued for the spiritual guidance they offer, while providing an anchor enabling newcomers to better position themselves to meet their new challenges. Contrasting the support offered by SISO and the mosque for immigrant newcomers, one Imam in Hamilton remarks:

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The mosque is spiritual - this is the main difference. Mosque is special for newcomers because all Moslems are attached to a mosque. When there are spiritual things, the families, the children and education, all this is what the mosque provides – religious side. The second and this is the most important, those that are coming new, they trust the mosque more than any organization because of that spiritual link. So this is the difference.

The powerful influence of the faith institutions shines through in their latent consequences. They serve as meeting places providing opportunities for people to associate with others that share such similarities as ideas, ways of life and ethnic and racial backgrounds. An official with a Sikh temple makes this point in the following: “We meet people’s emotional needs. It’s more emotional…. What important for newcomers is the emotional connection.” He adds:

… some of them have never been out of the country, so it’s their first trip ever overseas. They have difficulties. But when they come in here they face the difficulties with others. This is home. You’re with people you understand. So this is their second home.

A recently arrived immigrant who came as a skilled worker observed:

I go to an Adventist church…. It’s one of the things I really appreciate because when you are new in a country, in a place, you feel really uprooted, you feel like disoriented and have many fears. When I went to that church, those people are really friendly. They help us. For example, they offer to pay because they have a private school, they said that you can send you children to the private school and the church will pay.

These challenges can be accentuated when newcomers are also visible minorities. While many newcomers with whom we spoke attended churches that had a diverse membership, it is also clear that there is a place for faith institutions that define themselves as catering to a specific group:

They come here to this church because they are more comfortable fitting in which somebody of your own race, not culture, race. But you also know that there is a connection between Afro-Caribbeans because we all probably originated from Africa. You know, so there is a connection and the comfort level. We may not be able to speak French, but there is still a connection…. This is predominantly a black church. These are black people from Africa and we provide an association of comfort. (Church official)

Ethno-cultural associations
Some critics argue that Canadian immigration and multiculturalism policies weaken the country’s social fabric. Specifically, multiculturalism presumably
encourages immigrants to cling to their past rather than gradually eliminating their old self-conceptions and fashioning a distinctive Canadian identity. The discussion has centered on whether multiculturalism interferes with the process via which immigrants view themselves as contributors to Canadian society.

Contrary to what some critics of multicultural policy suggest, the ethno-cultural organizations we encountered could be seen as promoting integration. Rather than acting as barriers to integration, they actually facilitate integration into Hamilton society. The examples that follow serve as cases in point:

Every weekend there is a social gathering. This is one of the most important things. We need to see each other. Families talk about the problems we are facing here. We try to talk about some problems that newcomer families are facing. They don't know how to make connections with other services in the city. And we try to talk together men and women gather and they bring their kids. And sometimes in the summer we have picnics…. (Ethno-cultural association leader)

Most of the events also we're doing, we're trying to focus on how to integrate these families, especially their kids, within the society with the idea of giving, because this idea is missing from back home. Volunteering is non-existent in the same concept we know here. People are just busy… with wars, with their problems, with how to get their food. … If you talk to some from the Middle East countries, ‘Can you volunteer some hours to society?’ they would laugh. It’s a joke. ‘Like I’m not getting any payment for that?’ ‘No.’ So that another challenge we're trying to change, or at least growing them this concept…. (Ethno-cultural association leader)

And yet, the importance of ethno-cultural community organizations and associations is underscored for yet another reason: They assist in securing employment, however permanent or temporary, for their newest arrivals. Within them newcomers actively set into place informal networking groups. In some cases, such networking, resulting in newly established valuable contacts, helps find work. Such networking occurs both in the religious institutions they attend, but also in the associations they frequent. An example from each follows. In the first, an Imam shows how the mosque becomes involved:

What happens is those that have companies or some small business, they come here to pray. When they come, they come to greet Imam, they give me their card. They prefer to have someone recommended by me. They have stores, gas stations. ‘Imam, I need a serious person, someone who is honest’. And I know people who come to pray, they are educated. I can recommend them for a job.

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Next, a leader in an ethnic community association explained:

Like myself, for example, someone asked that he needs some help, he need someone to work the night shift for his store, or his gas station. Then I know someone coming recently and I know he’s looking, she’s looking for a job, just extend the word for them…. But we don’t have a program for that. There is an idea now, actually, one of he youth with us, he said: ‘Why don’t we do something very simple, a card saying, ‘do you have a job for a newcomer, contact this phone or this e-mail,’ and we will give it to these places where the community is working, or some business people, we’re giving them the card and we can publish it on a website. (Ethno-cultural association leader)

As one official who works in the settlement sector observes and quoted at length below, this informal approach resonates particularly with newcomers for whom a bureaucratic structure is both foreign and off-putting. As the official explains, it is to these informal networks that newcomers gravitate and where information gained is regarded to be reliable:

How do people access services? Services we tend to offer, especially in established communities, are very linearly oriented and a whole system has been set up…. They are all very structured. If you come from areas where you have had less structure or unofficial spatial relationships that is built on family connections, on networks, or who is who, you don’t have the connections within the community to get the services that you need. So there are some structural pieces that limit access to services, notwithstanding the best intentions of places like SISO.

There are formal and informal networks. Newcomers come in and function on informal networks, organizations function more on formal networks. So you probably have to go two ways: Within the organizations, as it were, infiltrating the informal networks and the doors being opened for the informal networks to have some kind of access into the more formal networks….

Think about cab drivers. Who are the cab drivers in Hamilton? The whole cab driver system is set up by a lot of new immigrants. Why? Because they come in and can’t find a job. Credentials aren’t recognized. So they have links to who runs the cabs. Cabs need to be serviced…. So what do the guys do? They help each other out. They don’t need to go to the bigger places to get their cabs serviced. On a Sunday afternoon, they go to somebody’s back yard …. And they help each other out because they recognize we’re all together in this boat…. It feels more comfortable talking to you in my language and that is a totally informal network….

Think of your relationships in your family. And you’ve been entrenched in this community for a long time. You go visit a family member and you have
a whole extended family. This is your support network. But because you’re entrenched in the community, those support networks work upwardly, vertically and those support networks work horizontally. When new immigrants come in, they may still be able to establish the horizontal networks but some of the vertical pieces aren’t available because they don’t know people at the top….I see them [immigrants] establish horizontal networks and groups. It happens with the church, it happens with the mosque, it happens with the various associations.

Despite the fact that these informally established networks may not provide the most accurate and credible advice, they nevertheless remain a primary source of information. Note this observation by an informant:

Now sometimes when you go to informal networks, is the information you get there valid? Not necessarily. Is the information you get there good? Not necessarily. Is it the information you believe? Absolutely. Because if you think about how people are, we work in groups. So you go to a group, you feel comfortable. And if you have large organizations and somebody walks through the door and they don’t see anybody in there that makes them feel comfortable, why would they want to go back? (Settlement sector worker)

Finally, while not setting out to compete with SISO, leaders of ethno-cultural associations, more than occasionally, pointed to how an infusion of limited funds would enable them to provide some essential services that they would be in the best position to deliver. Two leaders in an ethno-cultural association explain:

In our organization we have some dreams. We are not going to be like SISO. But we don’t want to be like SISO. We want to be ourselves. We have very limited financial resources. What we need are some financial resources. We used to collect some subscription fees from our members but it is very limited. We need some resources to run some the programs that are very useful. For example, our language class we are in need for some books, some educational material. … running costs of the school. We need to run the homework club. We need some financial sources. We do not dream to be a big, huge organization because we are serving a limited community. With these resources we think that we can provide better services for our community and in turn it will better service for Hamilton society and to Canada. (Ethno-cultural association leader)

Here in the community they [women] need a counselor. Because they come here with their knowledge, they need somebody to come and counsel them to tell them what to do because sometimes when they start here, they feel ‘what to do now’? We lack this type of counseling. And some people, after five or six years, they find it difficult to go back and ask about this. From the beginning, if we see somebody new now, we are
trying to tell him, ‘do this, do this’ because from our experience, if we get somebody to tell us five years back or seven years back, it would be very useful for us because we need I think, at least somebody counseling. All the efforts with the younger kids but for the older people, there is a lack of information… (Ethno-cultural association leader)

Even though places of worship and ethno-cultural community associations may not be formally mandated as part of the formal immigrant settlement sector, they nonetheless provide networks facilitating newcomer integration. Successful as they may be, these networks alone fail to overcome specific structural challenges awaiting the newcomers who come to the city.

6.0 Making Hamilton a “Welcoming Community”: Barriers to settlement and challenges in recruiting and retaining newcomers

Barriers to settlement
As noted above, the barriers that newcomers face are well documented in the literature on immigrant settlement and integration. Even though the main purpose of this report is not necessarily to provide further documentation of these barriers, it is nonetheless important to examine how these barriers are felt and experienced by newcomers and how they make sense of why and how these barriers persist. Newcomers we interviewed certainly expressed frustrations over the obstacles they face; some found it difficult to understand why Canada actually seems to set them up for failure. At the same time, they did not necessarily see these barriers as insurmountable and, as we discussed in previous sections of this report, in the course of establishing networks with longer settled residents of the city, they are working to find ways around the seemingly irrational obstacles placed in their way. Newcomer perspectives on these barriers and how they might be solved, indicate not only that immigrants in Hamilton are active participants in the settlement process, but also that they want to gain entry to all aspects of life in Hamilton.

As identified in the Wayland report, government rules can themselves be barriers to settlement and integration. While there are undoubtedly good reasons behind the specific rules related to which and for how long, newcomers can access services like English as a second language courses, it is also the case that some of these rules may underestimate the difficulty that some newcomers face in learning the language, particularly if they are elderly, if they have child care or other family responsibilities, or if they have not had the opportunity to learn and practice English outside of the confines of a refugee camp before coming to Canada. For some newcomers, particularly government assisted refugees who are not necessarily selected for admission to Canada on the basis of their human capital and English language abilities, it is important to recognize that language training may need to be more intense and of longer duration than one year. It is
unrealistic to expect all refugees to gain facility with English language within a year. As explained by one government assisted refugee:

When we first came here, we stayed under the federal government, just one year. In that one year, we get translators for free. We don’t need to pay. Whenever we go to the hospital, to the pharmacy, to our family doctor, everything is covered for us. But after one year, when the federal government didn’t take care of them, they have to apply to get Ontario assistance. So when they get Ontario assistance, they are not allowed to request an interpreter here. If they need an interpreter, they have to pay. Some of my people don’t speak English, they know it a little bit but don’t know how to pick up a phone to call SISO to help them request an interpreter. So they call, me at my apartment and when they call me so I help them to call SISO to let an interpreter go with them…. They need help for ten years…. In our language, it is easy to speak. We don’t have past tense…. But here, whenever we speak, we have to separate [into present and past tense]. It is very hard for them. (Refugee)

Others comment on how family and child-care responsibilities can make it difficult for adult newcomers to attend ESL courses. One government sponsored refugee family found it difficult for both the husband and wife to attend ESL classes because of family obligations and responsibilities. As explained by one Host volunteer who was matched up with a refugee family:

He goes to ESL classes. His wife is not taking ESL because they live with the grandmother and because the grandmother is old, she can’t go to school. And the mother is taking care of her daughter. Her daughter has a disability and so she has to stay with her daughter in the house. (Host volunteer)

Without question, utmost in the minds and preoccupations of newcomers is making a living and finding work that is commensurate with their education, training and experience. The lack of Canadian experience and the devaluation of overseas educational credentials are commonly cited barriers to settlement. Before moving to Canada, applicants for permanent residence status are not unaware of the difficulties associated with moving to a new country. Even before moving, they recognize that finding work in Canada that is consistent with their experience and training is going to be difficult and they realize that there are no guarantees associated with coming here, even if selected as a skilled worker:

I know a lot of people from my generation who are now in Canada. I know of doctors from my generation who came as doctors. Some of them make it through the system, some of them don’t. When I left Haiti to come to Canada, it was about finding a place for the children because there is so much insecurity over there. I did not want my children to get kidnapped. I said, whatever it takes, we are going to leave. So when we came here we
knew it would be difficult. See we were ready for everything, even for not being a doctor any more…. We just wanted to escape. (Skilled worker)

At the same time that newcomers express a willingness to sacrifice their own futures for the sake of their children, they are nonetheless unprepared for how difficult it is to actually negotiate the process of finding work.

Newcomers are also well aware of the traps associated with making decisions about where to work based on the immediate short-term need to feed their families as opposed to long-term goals. Some spoke about how it is possible to get “survival jobs” --low paying, unskilled, casual or part time work-- in the city, but they recognize that getting stuck in such jobs, in the end, is not in the long term interests of themselves, their children, or of Canadian society. As explained by one newcomer, in response to the observation that many newcomers come to Canada not for their own sake but for the sake of better futures for their children:

People say here you have to forget about your twenty years of schooling and learning… We always say we are looking out for our kids, for our kid’s futures. Ya, but you know, the future is for the kids but if the parents are satisfied, you know, the kids can have a better education because all this works together. You cannot say that I will just sacrifice for my kids and I am not working. If I am working, if I am having a better position, I can help my kids to have a better position and the whole economic cycle will go like that…. (Skilled worker)

When asked to explain why there seems to be a disjunction between the skilled worker selection system, which implies that Canada wants them because of their human capital and their skills and the harsh realities they face in finding work in Canada, newcomers put the matter in terms of trust. Unwilling to interpret the way that Canadian society devalues educational credentials and the reluctance of employers to hire newcomers, as forms of racism, one newcomer explained that the lack of trust on the part of the private sector is the key. Trust forms an important part of what social scientists call “social capital”, the collective resources available to groups of people that allow them to collectively advance their own interests. When trust is lacking in a set of relationships, it is easy to see how both parties in the relationship can suffer. As explained by one newcomer:

People trust the government. And I trust the government. But the private sector, when I go to them directly, they will not trust me. Because they are saying things like, a lot of people here, they can buy their certificate [overseas]. It is very difficult to buy a certificate. (Skilled worker)

In other words, some interpret the barriers they face as being rooted in Canadian authorities not trusting immigrants to be who and what, they say they are. Issues of trust, however, also spill over into other market transactions, particularly in relation to accommodation:

The really, really hardest part for me was to find an apartment because I didn’t know that even when you have money, people are not going to trust you because you don’t have a line of credit and you are not working yet so we couldn’t find a place to live. … Fortunately, finally we found somebody to sign for us as a guarantor. It was a surprise for us that even when you have money and you are showing the people you can pay, they don’t trust you. (Skilled worker)

The perceived lack of trust that sectors of Hamilton society display towards newcomers also leads some to question whether Canada truly lives up to its ideals and the countries self understanding as a multicultural nation: “I think the private sector is afraid. They don’t believe in multiculturalism. Because Canada is not multicultural.” (Skilled worker)

**Recruitment and Retention**

How willing individuals, organizations and employers in Hamilton are to help newcomers overcome these kinds of barriers will play a key role in how Hamilton can recruit immigrants to come and encourage them to stay. Hamilton is a medium sized city that is close to Toronto, the largest city in Canada and the city that attracts the bulk of immigrants to the country.

Newcomers spoke warmly and affectionately of the city, citing the general openness of the population of the city to newcomers. One explained: “We are lucky to be in Hamilton…. It is easier to start from a small city like Hamilton rather than a big city like Toronto.” In a similar vein, another newcomer suggested that:

I don’t have a lot of things to complain about Hamilton, except for the cold. But basically, I don’t have a lot of things to complain about. The city is really welcoming. (Skilled worker)

One ethno-cultural association leader spoke of the advantages of living in a medium sized city like Hamilton in terms of the openness of its institutions and the responsiveness of politicians to newcomer and ethnic communities:

We have good connections with politicians, different parties also. I remember running the soccer competition [last year], we were able to get donations from different companies. They really helped us a lot. They were very supportive. From grocery stores, pharmacies, many people helped us. This is one of the best things in Hamilton. (Ethno-cultural association leader)
Many of the newcomers with whom we spoke explained the reason for their settlement in Hamilton was linked to the networks of family and friends already living in the city. This pattern of chain migration is a common feature of many different kinds of migration flows: family class immigrants obviously come to Hamilton because their Canadian sponsors live here; at least some portion of government assisted refugees seem to be channeled to Hamilton, in part, because of the family connections they already have in the city. Even when immigrants arrive as skilled workers and are selected on the basis of their human capital, family and friendship networks play a role in shaping the decision to come to Hamilton:

We came here as skilled workers and when we applied for permanent residency, we wanted to go to an English speaking part of Canada because we wanted the children and we also wanted, to learn English. In 2005 my husband came here as a medical doctor. There was an exchange program between McMaster and our hospital in Haiti. So he came here and he saw the place and he said, ‘Ya, I saw that city and it looks like a good place to live, a good place to raise children.’ When we were making the application, we put Hamilton. We had a few people we could contact. There was a Haitian lady that my husband met in 2005. She was our main contact here. She encouraged us to come. (Skilled worker)

It seems clear from our research that friends and family members who migrated earlier are some of Hamilton’s biggest ambassadors. They play an important yet unacknowledged role in encouraging newcomers to settle in the city. These networks of family and friends, while important in shaping decisions to initially settle in the city, may not, however, be enough to keep newcomers.

Hamilton’s ability to retain immigrants is jeopardized by the problems that newcomers face in finding work. One religious leader recounted several cases of families of teachers, doctors and bankers that left Hamilton in the recent past because of difficulties they have faced in securing employment. In this context, it is not surprising that newcomers feel the pull of Toronto and cities with larger ethnic communities and more dense networks of co-ethnic support. As one ethno-cultural association official put it: “For Hamilton, jobs are the biggest problem. You moved away 10,000 miles [from India] so what is stopping you to move 50 miles to [Toronto or Mississauga]?"

Others echoed the sentiment that the lack of job opportunities posed the biggest challenge for Hamilton’s ability to retain immigrants. One refugee describes a case where a member of his community found a job at a local mushroom farm but was laid off shortly after she started: “She was laid off and couldn’t find a job, she went to Vancouver to find a better job there. The whole family went there.” A skilled immigrant explains that:
We love this city. We love this country. We are a part of the country. We are very secure here, but this security will not be fulfilled, or will not be complete without a secure job, without a job. This is the main problem. (Skilled worker)

It is evident that there are two challenges facing Hamilton when it comes to the recruitment and retention of immigrants. First, from the perspective of recruitment, how can the city take advantage of the warm feelings that newcomers have towards living in the city and the positive role that friends and kin play in encouraging newcomers to settle here? Second, in relation to retention, how can it help newcomers overcome the barriers they face in finding work that allows them to fully use their skills, training and expertise?

7.0 Conclusion

There has been a move in recent years away from talking in reified terms about “social structures” – divorce rates, division of labour, racism – as if there were mysterious forces somehow exercising agency or acting on human beings. More and more, social scientists appreciate that it is human beings who act and who, through the ways in which they define situations and construct lines of action for themselves, create and constantly recreate social structures. Towards this end, we would be amiss in characterizing immigrants as cultural dupes, forever buffeted by outside forces over which they exercise little, if any, control. Instead, the clear conclusion derived from our analysis is that immigrant newcomers are imaginatively resourceful and to be admired for the entrepreneurial skills they display. In this regard, they become micro-managers of their destiny, seeking to ensure that they acquaint themselves with and benefit maximally from, programs in place to cushion their transition.

In the conclusion of our article, Immigrants and Immigrant Settlement in Hamilton, we wrote:

… [there are opportunities in the city] for the introduction of innovative approaches to responding to newcomers’ needs, expectations and dreams and empowering them to shape the contours of their personal journeys and to call Hamilton their new home.42

Based on the work we have completed, we are in a position to conclude that, far from viewing immigrant newcomers to be the passive recipients of services that government-supported and private organizations make available, immigrants display resourcefulness, ambition and creativity as they interact with outside officials and co-ethnics to pave a path, however wide or narrow, to attend to the challenges before them. It, therefore, behooves the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council to determine a viable route for accessing such energy and

42 Satzewich and Shaffir, 2007, op. cit.
inventiveness – perhaps best through ethno-cultural community based associations – while simultaneously acknowledging the compelling services offered through the formal settlement sector.

8.0 Recommendations

- Funding sources should consider the development of a funding stream and allocate a moderate amount of resources, that recognizes and gives support to the informal settlement sector and its role in the integration of newcomers.

- Funding sources should develop mechanisms to allow closer collaboration between the formal and informal settlement sectors. Clearly, there are complementarities to the activities and objectives of the funded, formal settlement sector and the activities of places of worship and community associations. While there already are links between the formal settlement sector and the informal activities engaged in by places of worship and community associations, these links could be further strengthened.

- Various service providers, including those in the health, education, human services sectors and well as municipal governments, need to find ways to connect with the informal settlement sector and to, thereby, enhance relations based on measures of trust. Settlement and integration of newcomers is relevant for each of these sectors and they need to develop a better appreciation for the ways that local ethno-cultural associations and places of worship can provide complementary forms of assistance and can disseminate information.

- Newcomers express concern over the lack of trust displayed towards them by the private sector, especially with regards to housing rentals and work-related qualifications. On-going efforts could be undertaken by the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council, in the form of seminars, workshops, newspaper articles, towards dispelling the stereotype that newcomers are untrustworthy and seek to inflate their credentials.

- The Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council should develop a strategy that will encourage and enable different levels of municipal based institutions and organizations to work with the informal settlement sector. Neighbourhood associations, business improvement associations and other local community associations need to be encouraged to make connections with the informal settlement sector.

- The Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council needs to develop a strategy to better disseminate information to newcomers. Information
needs to recognize that newcomers do not all face the same challenges and do not necessarily follow the same pathways, towards integration.

- A more complete picture of the scope of the informal sector with respect to settlement and integration is needed. Further funding should be made available for research on the ways that ethno-cultural associations and places of worship in Hamilton play a role in the settlement and integration of newcomers to the city