

## **Executive Summary**

Planning for immigration to small-sized cities is an under-researched yet critical topic of inquiry. According to Drolet and Teixeira (2020) there is a need to better understand how settlement can be tailored to a small city context with increasing numbers of immigrants choosing to settle outside of Canada's largest urban centers. By 2034, it is expected that "immigration will eventually account for 100% of the country's population growth, as native deaths will exceed native births" (Zhuang, 2021, p.205). As such it is important to continue exploring how smaller municipalities can plan for settlement and better support immigrant retention.

The existing academic literature demonstrates the importance of place-based interventions for fostering immigrant inclusion (Smith & Ley, 2008; Holley & Jedwab, 2019; Agrawal et al., 2023). While new immigrants to Canada are increasingly seeking out suburban locations for settlement, municipalities must consider how they can address the housing, transportation, and social infrastructure challenges that may serve as barriers to integration (Allen et al., 2021; Blower, 2020; Zhuang, 2021). Addressing the demonstrated disconnect between immigration planning and community planning is a critical first step in improving small municipalities (Garcea, 2007; Guo & Guo, 2016; Pottie-Sherman & Graham, 2021; Zhuang, 2021). The academic literature clearly underscores the importance of centering equity and fostering welcoming communities within urban planning practice (Harwood, 2022).

Despite the existing knowledge base surrounding the settlement trajectory of recent immigrants, many policymakers remain uninformed, ill-equipped, and slow to adapt to the changing infrastructure needs that accompany increased growth (Zhuang, 2021; Harwood, 2022). Yet, many cities in Atlantic Canada including Moncton, New Brunswick, can be considered 'aspiring

gateway cities' (Pottie-Sherman & Graham, 2020). These are cities that are proactively working to become gateway cities and increase immigrant retention (Pottie-Sherman & Graham, 2020).

In 2022, Greater Moncton, New Brunswick was deemed to be Canada's fastest growing Census Metropolitan Area with a 5.4% growth rate (City of Moncton, 2024). Moncton's recent increase in immigrant settlement accompanied by upcoming municipal policy reviews begs the questions: How are small Canadian cities like Moncton engaging with immigrant settlement through infrastructure planning? What can be learned and improved from Moncton's current approach?

I addressed these two overarching questions through three main research objectives:

- 1) Analyze Moncton's approach to settlement through a content analysis of the City's current immigration and planning policies.
- 2) Determine the perceived impact of Moncton's planning policies on recent immigrants through semi-structured interviews with municipal planners and settlement organizations.
- 3) Develop policy and planning recommendations for small municipalities looking to engage with immigrant settlement.

This report focused on Moncton, New Brunswick as a case study city given its recent influx of immigrant settlement and the challenges the municipality faces with an aging population and declining industries (Krawchenko, 2014). The City has been actively working to leverage their municipal resources in order to attract newcomers to the area (Mahdi, 2022).

My study implemented a multi-phase qualitative analysis, beginning with a content review of Moncton's Official Plan and the Greater Moncton Immigration Strategy. The purpose of the content review was to gain insight into current planning and immigration policies and how they align with best practices for welcoming cities. The findings from the content analysis helped to shape the interview guides used in the latter parts of the study. In the second phase of the study, I

conducted semi-structured interviews with planning practitioners and representatives from settlement organizations in Moncton. The former set of interviews was focused on developing an understanding of current planning practice as it relates to planning for recent immigrants as well as the challenges and opportunities associated with planning for growth. The interviews with settlement organizations furthered the discussion into policy and current practice by highlighting the impacts of planning on immigrant communities.

The findings from my research demonstrated inconsistencies in priorities between Moncton's Municipal Plan and the Greater Moncton Immigration Strategy. While the latter document exemplified numerous recommended best practices for welcoming cities, the needs of recent immigrants were rarely considered within urban planning policy. Interviews with planning practitioners and settlement workers mirrored these findings. While planners discussed efforts to increase housing density within Moncton's downtown core and improve transit corridors, settlement workers expressed that vertical growth and current transit networks did not always meet the needs of recent immigrants. Improving social infrastructure came up frequently as an important next step forward for the municipality, including integrating more community spaces. Planners and settlement workers also touched on the need for improved inter-departmental collaboration and increased opportunities for immigrant engagement. As the City of Moncton continues to work to improve their municipal structure, it will be important to ensure that policy directives between departments are in alignment and that new opportunities for immigrant engagement are explored.

Based on the findings of this report, four key recommendations were developed for both Moncton and other small municipalities looking to becoming more welcoming communities. Municipalities should aim to (1) diversify housing and transit infrastructure, (2) enhance immigrant engagement, (3) prioritize human connection, and (4) improve inter-departmental

collaboration. Taken together, these recommendations aim to guide small municipalities in improving their urban planning practices and policies to becoming more welcoming communities.

It is worth noting that, given time and resource constraints, this report focuses on the policies, experiences, challenges, and opportunities of immigrant settlement through a single case study. Future research into planning for immigrant settlement would benefit from conducting a multi-case study of small cities that are seeking to become immigrant-friendly destinations. It would also be beneficial for future studies to seek out the first-hand perspectives of immigrants and refugees to Moncton. This would help with identifying best practices and common challenges faced by municipalities.