

Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland: A Comparative Assessment of Two Islands As Viable Destinations for Immigrant Entrepreneurs

Project S.10

Study by: Crystal Fall

With the support of Dr. Lisa Chilton,
Dr. Godfrey Baldacchino, and Dr. Irene Novaczek.

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Introduction

This study is an investigation of the social and economic experiences of international immigrant entrepreneurs who have settled in Prince Edward Island (PEI) and Newfoundland (NL) over the past two decades.

A priority of this study is whether or not the issues that preoccupy immigrant entrepreneurs may be magnified by the geographic qualities embedded in islands.

In keeping with the strength of the Master of Arts Island Studies program, this research will be multi-disciplinary and multi-faceted while considering an island-to-island comparative perspective within the larger framework of the history of immigration to Canada's Atlantic Region.

The study's findings will be set within a larger regional and historical context to contribute to a better understanding of current issues regarding entrepreneurial immigrant integration and retention.



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Background and Rationale

This project developed as a natural extension of *Immigrant Entrepreneurs on Prince Edward Island* (authored by Godfrey Baldacchino, published 2008), which highlights 60 firms owned by immigrant entrepreneurs. As a research assistant to Professor Baldacchino, I conducted the 35 in-depth interviews profiled in this book. This project will also draw upon the findings published in two similar studies (2006 and 2007) relating to the experiences of 42 immigrant entrepreneurs in Newfoundland.

This comparative study of the experiences of immigrant entrepreneurs in PEI and NL will expand our understanding of issues that relate to poor integration and low retention rates by evaluating the experiences of immigrant entrepreneurs – the largest category of immigrants entering Canada at this time.



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Community/University Collaboration

Consultation with community groups, settlement service organizations, financial advisors (ACOA), policy makers, and educators is an essential aspect of this study, as these are the front-line members of the host society dealing with newcomers. Consultation with these groups will provide additional insight as to the needs, wants, and concerns of immigrants, and their family members, who are trying to settle in this region and establish viable, sustainable businesses.

The PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada is already a committed partner; my hope is for further collaboration in both provinces because this research is an opportunity for host societies to learn about the immigrants in their midst and what it takes to make these two provinces welcoming destinations, not just stopovers.



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Project Methodology

This study builds upon a significant base of research already completed for:

- *Immigrant Entrepreneurs on Prince Edward Island* (2008)
- a chapter in *Pulling Strings* (2008) addressing immigration, repatriation and retention strategies in PEI compared to other sub-national island jurisdictions
- research for the PEI Government, *Population changes... Population matters...* (2008), examining in part policies, programs and services for immigrants.
- *Profiles of Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Newfoundland and Labrador* (2006 and 2007), and PEI's recently published profiles, offer knowledge about the education, home countries, family histories, ethnic origins, previous business experiences, push factors that encouraged emigration, as well as pull factors that brought the immigrant entrepreneurs to Canada.

All of this research will serve as a starting point for semi-structured interviews in both provinces with the immigrant entrepreneurs and other relevant community members. Quantitative data and qualitative information will serve to inform the findings so that the immigrants will have an opportunity to fully express concerns and issues that have been neglected thus far.



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Main Findings To Date

“Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland: A Comparative Assessment of Two Islands as Viable Destinations for Immigrant Entrepreneurs” is in its infancy. However, initial research reveals the need for:

- A more comprehensive look at immigrants and their settlement experiences reaching beyond purely economic factors.
- An examination of the family as a whole unit because the settlement or integration experience is only as strong as its weakest link.
- A broader contextualization of current data.
- An examination of the role of language acquisition in newcomer retention.



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Deliverables

The findings of this research will form the body of my Master's thesis for the Master of Arts Island Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island.

The purpose of this project is to:

- present a clear set of ranked concerns according to immigrant entrepreneurs in both islands with regard to integration and retention issues.
- work with the various government and non-government representatives to address questions that they have regarding settlement and migration.
- report on the current state of immigration in PEI and NL as well as place that knowledge in a larger historical context.
- provide not only an island-to-island perspective, but also an island-to-mainland viewpoint.



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“Indeed, it’s one of the cruel ironies of life that a country that continues to bill itself as the freest, safest and most solicitous in the world is also one where immigrants often find their new lives as challenging as the ones they left behind” (*Atlantic Business Magazine*, March/April 2008, p.32).

This project aims to clarify these challenges and to assist policy makers and communities as they address integration and retention issues.

Through the accumulated findings, clear recommendations should emerge to assist both the host societies and immigrants attempting to settle and establish successful, sustainable businesses in these two Canadian island provinces.



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Next Steps

If you are an immigrant entrepreneur or have information or insight regarding immigrant entrepreneurs either in Newfoundland or Prince Edward Island, please contact me at the University of Prince Edward Island:
cfall@upei.ca.

I would be pleased to meet with anyone who can assist in making this project a rich resource. Thank you very much.

Crystal Fall



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