

Canadian Municipalities and Services for Immigrants: A Toronto Case Study

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Abstract

The formal role of municipal governments in decision-making about immigration and settlement policies is limited. The Canada Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA) represented an important step toward more effective collaboration between federal, municipal and provincial governments in this policy area. We investigate the circumstances that led to the inclusion of the City of Toronto as a signatory to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in COIA as well as how this tripartite agreement affected intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder partnerships. Although the MOU encouraged interaction between federal, provincial and municipal governments; the municipal role remained consultative. Our analysis suggests that the incorporation of municipalities in decision-making about settlement policies is limited by the practices of Canadian federalism and planning ideologies that emphasize municipal responsibility for an undifferentiated public.

Keywords: municipalities, immigrants, settlement, policy, intergovernmental relations, COIA

Résumé

Le rôle officiel des gouvernements municipaux concernant la prise de décisions au sujet de l'immigration et des politiques d'établissement est limitée. L'Accord Canada-Ontario sur l'immigration (ACOI) représente un pas important vers une collaboration plus efficace entre le gouvernement fédéral, les gouvernements municipaux et provinciaux. L'article examine les circonstances qui ont mené à l'inclusion de la ville de Toronto en tant que signataire du protocole d'entente (PE) de cet accord ainsi que l'impact de cet accord tripartite sur les organisations intergouvernementales et les multiples partenariats. Bien que le PE encourage l'interaction entre le gouvernement fédéral et les gouvernements provinciaux et municipaux; le rôle des municipalités demeure consultatif. Notre analyse suggère que l'intégration des municipalités dans la prise de décisions au sujet des politiques d'établissement est limitée par les pratiques du fédéralisme canadien et des idéologies de planification qui met l'emphasis sur la responsabilité des municipalités pour un public indifférencié.

Mots clés : les municipalités, les immigrants, politique d'établissement, relations intergouvernementales, COIA

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Municipalities play a key role in immigrant settlement in Canada. Immigrants selected by the federal and provincial governments settle in Canadian cities that benefit when immigrants succeed but deal with the fallout when they struggle to find jobs commensurate with their qualifications, have difficulties locating affordable housing, and encounter challenges settling family members. Despite municipalities' significant part in successful settlement, decision-making about services such as language training and mentoring that are intended to smooth immigrants' progress, is largely the prerogative of the federal and provincial governments. The Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement, COIA, promised to create new relationships among federal, provincial and municipal governments through memoranda of understanding concerning the provision of settlement services that were signed by the City of Toronto, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the two senior levels of government¹. Building on previous research (Andrew and Hima 2011; Stasiulis, Hughes, and Amery 2011), we investigate the partnerships that resulted from the Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Toronto, Canada's major gateway city where almost half the population is foreign-born. The case study of Toronto focuses on governance, the relationships between government, civil society agencies and actors (Andrew and Hima 2011), allowing us to investigate how the MOU influenced municipal involvement in services for immigrants. Although the findings refer specifically to Toronto, with its unique history of immigration and municipal involvement in services for immigrants, the case study provides insight into the circumstances that affect cooperation concerning immigrant services among Canadian municipalities and provincial and federal governments.

Services for Immigrants in Canadian Municipalities

All migrants accepted as permanent residents in Canada are eligible for some publicly funded services however entitlement to specific services varies, depending especially on immigration class and citizenship status (Hawkins 1991; Leitner and Preston 2011; Omidvar and Richmond 2004; Tolley and Young 2011). Diverse non-profit, non-governmental organizations (NGOs),² use federal and provincial funds to deliver services (Richmond and Shields 2005; Landolt, Goldring, and Bernhard 2009; Andrew and Hima 2011). While delegating responsibility for delivering services, the federal and provincial governments retain control through the accountability and reporting requirements that accompany funding (Poirier 2006; Stasiulis, Hughes, and Amery 2011). For example, federally funded language training is only available to permanent residents before they become Canadian citizens and it is funded per student hour of class. Organizations must fund language training for citizens, temporary residents and other migrants from provincial and other sources (Rajkumar et al. 2012). This strategy, often described as roll-out neoliberalism (Peck, 2008; Peck and Tickell, 2002), disempowers municipal governments and NGOs. Federal and provincial governments influence the activities of service providers and their municipal partners by specifying eligibility rules and the types and formats of services that will be funded. Despite their intimate knowledge of immigrants' needs, municipal governments and NGOs must comply with federal and provincial policies to receive funding (Richmond and Shields 2005; Leitner and Preston 2011; Stasiulis, Hughes, and Amery 2011).

The governance of services for immigrants highlights the subordinate role of municipalities within the Canadian federation. Municipalities are creatures of the provinces, with powers and responsibilities that are circumscribed by provincial legislation (Friskien 2007; Good 2009; Leo and Martine 2009; Tolley and Young 2011; Young 2012). Current constitutional arrangements mandate little official involvement for municipalities in immigration and settlement policies. Despite recent federal recognition that these policies should be tailored to local circumstances with which municipal governments are more familiar than any other level of government (Burr 2011), cooperation among federal, provincial and municipal governments has proved challenging perhaps because the conditions for successful intergovernmental cooperation are demanding and difficult to sustain. Cooperation is more likely when leadership is persistent and focused, there are sustained coordinating institutions, and all parties demonstrate mutual respect for the fiscal capacity of each level of government and a commitment to cooperative rather than unilateral decision-making (Bradford 2008; Andrew and Hima 2011; Vineberg 2012).

Municipal involvement in services for immigrants is also influenced by urban planning ideologies that often overlook the ethnic and racial diversity of urban populations. Municipal policies that recognize the needs of specific residents such as immigrants challenge municipal mandates to serve all residents (Wallace

and Frisken 2000; Sandercock 2003; Good 2009). Wallace and Frisken (2000) reported that in large and small municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area, only a few planners recommended policies and programs to address the specific needs of immigrants. Some municipal policies such as Toronto's neighbourhood improvement areas (NIA) targeted locations where immigrants were concentrated, however the size and needs of the immigrant population were not explicit criteria for designation as a NIA (Doolittle 2014). In large metropolitan areas with long histories of immigration (Good 2009; Sandercock 2003), such planning practices have been criticized as failing to respond to the diverse needs of urban residents. The MOU that was signed in September, 2006 by the federal government, Ontario, and the City of Toronto provided an opportunity to develop new relationships that would better serve the city's diverse population (Andrew and Hima 2011; Stasiulis, Hughes, and Amery 2011).

Drawing on information available by 2011, we evaluate how the partnerships between the city, the other two levels of government and NGOS evolved during the life of the MOU. Information about the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement was obtained from policy documents available from municipal, provincial, and federal departments. An examination of Ontario and federal parliamentary records³ that identified documents about COIA and other immigration agreements was supplemented with a detailed review of City Council minutes to locate relevant documents about implementation of the MOU (City of Toronto 2008, 2010). Documentary information was complemented by interviews with three provincial and federal officials who were Assistant Deputy Ministers and Directors charged with the provision of settlement services, five current and former municipal bureaucrats responsible for negotiating and implementing the Memorandum of Understanding and three executives from NGOs that advocate for immigrants and immigrant-serving agencies in Toronto. Each interview is identified by a sector and participant number. In addition to asking about the history of COIA, the City of Toronto's involvement in the MOU, and its impact on settlement services, participants were also asked to comment on the nature and success of partnerships in the immigrant-serving sector in 2011. Interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and interpreted through content analysis through a search for key terms such as municipality, local, Toronto, and Local Immigration Partnership and the identification of themes through a recursive process (DeLyser 2010).

Toronto's Involvement in the Canada Ontario Immigration Agreement

In 2011, all of the provinces and two territories, Yukon and the North West Territories, had agreements with the federal government designed to ensure that settlement programs responded to the unique economic and social needs of each jurisdiction through collaborative strategies for providing services to newcomers (Li 2012; Vineberg 2012). COIA was unique because it included a tripartite MOU between federal, provincial and municipal levels of government. The MOU marked one of the first times all three levels of government collaborated to address immigrants' needs and it enhanced the role of the City of Toronto in intergovernmental arrangements concerning immigration and settlement. Through the establishment of two consultation tables; one addressing language training and the second regarding settlement services, COIA increased municipal contact with decision makers from the federal and provincial governments.

While the Association of Municipalities of Ontario also signed a separate MOU, Toronto is the only municipality that is a signatory to a MOU in a federal-provincial agreement on immigration. The memorandum of understanding promotes a comprehensive and sustained relationship between the federal, provincial and local governments in the area of immigration and settlement. The rationale for including Toronto as a signatory was its large size, its large immigrant population, and the City's long involvement in serving immigrants (Government of Canada 2005). Toronto is Canada's largest municipality with a population of approximately 2.6 million in 2011, of whom almost half is foreign born (Statistics Canada 2013). As the major gateway for newcomers to Ontario and Canada, the City of Toronto and, later, Metropolitan Toronto has a long history of involvement in services for immigrants beginning in the 1970s (Frisken 2007, 174). In 1995, Metropolitan Toronto created an Access and Equity Centre to promote equitable delivery of social and community services to all residents, including newcomers (Frisken, 2007, 218). With amalgamation, the enlarged City of Toronto maintained its commitment to equitable delivery through the Immigration and Settlement Policy Framework approved in 2001. The City has also collaborated with numerous non-governmental organizations such as the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council to develop strategies that assist immigrant integration (Maytree Foundation 2013). A Human Rights Office also provides regular reports on complaints and

numerous educational activities within the municipal government. The City is known to have “the experience and expertise and community infrastructure to respond... to the social and economic integration needs and potential of immigrants” (Government of Canada 2005).

The MOU is a government-to-government agreement that recognizes how the municipal government’s interest in immigration and settlement parallels that of the federal and provincial governments. According to the City, “the MOU provides a forum for policy discussions in which the city participates as a partner government, and not merely as a stakeholder” (City of Toronto 2008, 3). Despite these provisions, it is important to emphasize that the senior levels of government only committed to information sharing and consultation. Through the MOU, the City of Toronto did not gain much access to additional resources for facilitating immigrant settlement⁴.

The memorandum of understanding is qualitatively different from other federal-provincial immigration agreements that call for municipal partnerships and dialogue between provincial and municipal governments, but do not include municipal governments as partners to the agreements. For example, the province of Quebec has bilateral agreements with selected municipalities that provide provincial funds for services for immigrants, however, the municipalities are considered stakeholders, not partners (Chiasson and Koji 2011:172). The treatment of municipalities in Quebec as subordinate levels of government that will be consulted and funded at provincial discretion resonates with their treatment in the other federal-provincial/ territorial immigration agreements prevailing at the time of this study. In all instances, the provincial/ territorial governments retained control over services for immigrants.

The requirement that the City of Toronto be involved in discussions with the senior levels of government affected the municipality’s involvement in services for immigrants, the relationships between the city and the immigrant-serving sector, and the links between the municipal government and the federal and provincial governments. In 2011, municipal involvement in COIA emphasized consultation and discussion. The City had staff representatives on the consultation tables and their regular meetings facilitated ongoing interaction among municipal, provincial, and federal representatives. All parties agreed that the interaction produced better working relationships that responded to Toronto’s distinct circumstances (Federal 2, Ontario 2, Municipal 2, 3). Recognition that the municipality is a level of government that must be heard in government to government consultations “led to better information sharing... there was a common hearing of what the priorities were” (Ontario 2). For example, discussions at the consultation tables influenced the design and implementation of the city’s Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP), “multi-sectoral partnerships at the local level to integrate newcomer needs into the municipal planning process, while influencing provincial and federal priorities and processes,” (Burr 2011, 7). While local governments lead many of the LIPs in Ontario, four of the Toronto LIPs are led by non-governmental organizations, while the City heads a fifth, city-wide LIP⁵ (City of Toronto 2013).

In addition to the city’s active role in designing and executing the LIP strategy, the MOU Steering Committee has also agreed to support specific activities funded by separate agreements with Citizenship and Immigration Canada. They include a scoping study of settlement services and research about temporary foreign workers. Participants at the consultation tables also completed an agreement on information and data sharing and established an annual meeting cycle (City of Toronto 2010). City of Toronto informants noted that the MOU also facilitated successful project collaboration with regards to improving the Immigration Portal funded through the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and the design and implementation of the Toronto Newcomer Initiative that integrated settlement workers into municipal departments and city facilities (Municipal 1,2, 3). Over a period of 22 weeks, Parks, Forestry and Recreation hosted ten settlement staff in community centres, three worked in hostels operated by Shelters, Support and Housing Administration and one settlement worker was located at a municipal daycare centre. In addition, Toronto Public Health hosted four settlement staff. Funded through a separate agreement between the City of Toronto and Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the experiment enhanced newcomers’ access to municipal services and sensitized municipal workers to the distinct needs of immigrants (City of Toronto 2008, 2010).

The Reasons for a Tripartite MOU

There is a remarkable consensus about the reasons for the MOU in the Canada Ontario Immigration Agreement. Several informants (Municipal 1, 2, 3, 4, Services 1, 2) noted that the “stars aligned” at the municipal, federal

and provincial levels. At the municipal level, an activist mayor, Mayor David Miller, had a longstanding interest in immigration and sought recognition of the City of Toronto as an indispensable partner in federal-provincial negotiations. Achieving this goal was facilitated by a federal government committed to an urban agenda and a provincial government that had promised to reverse provincial decisions that downloaded financial responsibilities to municipalities in the 1990s (Siegel 2009).

Through its involvement in COIA, the City of Toronto sought to demonstrate its status as a government partner, rather than being consulted as one of a number of different stakeholders. Mayor Miller emphasized that the city was a major destination for immigrants and had a large financial stake in decision-making about services for immigrants. He advocated for policies and programs to address settlement challenges and appointed a Community Liaison to facilitate communication and collaboration between municipal officials, politicians and representatives from ethnic organizations, immigrant-serving agencies and other community groups (Services 2). Immigration and settlement policies were seen as an opening for the City of Toronto to gain a seat at the table in federal-provincial negotiations so that:

“when the provincial and federal governments are creating policies that affect urban issues—such as immigration, infrastructure, public health, child care, and so on—Toronto has to be a part of the decision-making process.” (Canada’s Cities News 2006).

At the federal level, Prime Minister Paul Martin was committed to a “New Deal for Cities,” that included transferring funds directly from the federal government to municipal governments. For example, the 2004 federal budget earmarked a portion of the gas tax for maintenance and development of municipal infrastructure (Swift 2005)⁶. COIA was also negotiated after the federal government devolved responsibility for labour market agreements across Canada. The Labour Market Development Agreements demonstrated that devolution could be tailored to the diverse interests and circumstances of the provinces (Bakvis and Aucoin 2000). Equally important, the negotiations had provided crucial experience for federal and provincial bureaucrats about how to manage devolution. The Labour Market Development Agreements created a favourable climate for considering local needs in the negotiations that led to COIA. In this context, including the City of Toronto as a signatory to the MOU was both feasible and useful to demonstrate the federal government’s commitment to a new relationship with municipalities.

The political landscape was also shifting, drawing attention to immigration issues in Toronto (Services 1). The Liberal Party of Canada needed votes in Toronto to compensate for the steady loss of voters in Western Canada (Gidengil et al. 2009). Traditionally, visible minority voters had also voted for the Liberals. Home to the largest concentration of recent immigrants and visible minorities in Canada, the City of Toronto was an attractive location for policy initiatives appealing to immigrants.

At the provincial level, the election of a Liberal government in 2003 signaled a shift in provincial policies and priorities concerning municipalities (Siegel 2009). While the previous Conservative government had amalgamated municipalities and down-loaded fiscal responsibility for several services, the Liberals promised to halt down-loading and up-load costs for social assistance and its administration (Municipal 5). The emphasis on restoring the fiscal health of municipalities may have encouraged the province to recognize the City of Toronto as a crucial partner in discussions about settlement issues.

The Impacts of the Canada Ontario Immigration Agreement

Representatives from the three levels of government and from immigrant-serving agencies in the City of Toronto have diverging evaluations concerning the effectiveness of the MOU for managing the challenges of immigration and settlement. Government representatives considered that the memorandum improved intergovernmental relationships and consultation related to immigration and settlement issues. The immigrant serving sector, however, did not achieve the structural changes that it considered essential to improve services for immigrants in the City of Toronto.

The City was interested in developing and maintaining relationships with the federal and provincial governments that recognized the municipal government as a government partner. Being a signatory to the MOU was a critical step in developing an effective partnership in which the municipality would be empowered to participate in future federal-provincial agreements. Sustained successful consultations and discussions help the City of Toronto move towards this goal. According to the municipal representatives consulted for this

study, the City of Toronto does not want funding from its participation in the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (Municipal 2, 3, 4). They explain the city's views with two arguments related to the roles and status of municipal governments. Municipal officials stress that the city provides services for all residents, not population subgroups, such as immigrants. City representatives interviewed for this study were also unanimous that the City does not want or need additional funding for immigrant services.

Municipal representatives also insisted that the City was not interested in selection policies concerning the classes of immigrants that would be recruited to settle in the city (Municipal 2, Services 1, 2). The municipality's stance mirrors the province's previous lack of interest in selection policies. It is also consistent with the municipal focus on promoting consultation rather than gaining more decision-making power over immigration policies. The City's satisfaction with the MOU suggests that it used COIA to develop new partnerships with senior levels of government that would facilitate municipal involvement in future negotiations concerning major issues such as infrastructure (Stasiulis, Hughes, and Amery 2011).

The Immigrant-Serving Sector

Within the immigrant-serving sector, there is some dissatisfaction with the City of Toronto's involvement in COIA. The immigrant-serving sector has not achieved its main goals of embedding concern for immigrants in all city services and being part of a successful and respectful partnership with all the levels of government involved in providing immigrant services (Services 1, 2). Representatives from NGOs are seeking effective partnerships in which the voices and concerns of immigrant-serving agencies are heard and affect decisions about services.

As the City of Toronto deepened its interactions with federal and provincial officials, non-governmental organizations lost opportunities to advocate with the City (Services 2). Some of the advisory groups and committees that had allowed immigrant-serving agencies to discuss how the City could best serve newcomers were lost. Under David Miller, mayoral support for diversity issues reassured the agencies that these issues would be considered in municipal decision-making. The appointment of a community liaison who acted as the focal point for concerns about settlement services also drew interest away from the advisory groups and committees where the immigrant-serving sector had expressed its views. As a result, the agencies directed scarce resources to other issues, reducing their participation. Several working groups and committees also ceased to operate so that immigrant-serving agencies lost opportunities for advocacy (Services 2). The continuation of the City of Toronto's Immigrant and Refugee Housing Committee offers an informative contrast to the cessation of other committees. The committee's persistence reflects, in part, municipal responsibility for and interest in housing. The City funds housing services for immigrants that are delivered through housing help centers and immigrant-serving agencies. The municipal funding commitment encourages the City to provide the administrative resources needed to sustain the committee's activities and promotes NGO involvement.

Immigrant-serving agencies remain concerned that the consultation tables set up under the MOU encourage municipal interest in a limited set of services targeting immigrants. While the NGO informants recognize that the City serves all residents, they note that newcomers make up almost half the population (Municipal 1, Services 2). They argue that the city can only meet residents' needs for city services when it meets the needs of immigrants. One informant commented that the program by which settlement workers were incorporated in parks and recreation services should be extended to all city services. One person asked rhetorically "Why aren't these programs being embedded as municipal responsibilities through COIA?" (Services 2).

For the immigrant-serving agencies, any promise of a respectful partnership with the federal, provincial, and municipal governments ended with the federal decision to cut settlement funding in 2011 (OCASI, 2011). The cuts were announced without any discussion with either the province or the City of Toronto, confirming that power is held closely by the federal government. Despite the consultation tables established under COIA, neither the province nor the municipality advocated successfully on behalf of the immigrant-serving sector. The unilateral nature of the funding cuts undermined the partnership between the City and the immigrant-serving sector that municipal involvement in COIA was supposed to exploit and threatened the partnership among the three levels of government (Young 2012).

Provincial and Federal Governments

Discussions with provincial and federal officials underscore their satisfaction with the City of Toronto's

involvement in COIA. From a provincial perspective, the agreement has allowed for closer involvement and more coordination with the City. The MOU made implementing provincial initiatives easier and possibly more effective. For example, provincial obligations to comment annually on the federal targets for immigration have been facilitated by on-going discussions at the consultation tables (Ontario 1). Information-sharing is also easier because of the sustained interactions among municipal and provincial representatives. Finally, the consultation tables have allowed provincial initiatives concerning employment services to be integrated better with municipal services.

Federal government officials shared the province's satisfaction with the tripartite agreement, although for different reasons. They appreciated working directly with the City of Toronto where so many immigrants settle. For example, decisions about the initial boundaries of Local Immigration Partnerships were made collaboratively by representatives from the three levels of government (Federal 1). For federal officials, the current partnership created useful avenues for consultation with the City. According to one:

“Certainly when we have been looking back at what was accomplished under COIA, one of the things that the federal government thinks has been a great accomplishment is that MOU with the city of Toronto... Part of it has been the advent of the LIPs and part of it has been just the openness... So the federal government is keen on having municipalities at the table. We recognize and respect the constitutional responsibility of the provinces, so it has to be a provincial decision to bring municipalities to the table, but we are very keen on seeing more of that plan and we think that's important.”(Federal 1)

Despite the overall enthusiasm for the partnership, tensions have emerged. The partnership between the City of Toronto and the federal government raised concerns for provincial officials. They saw the province's traditional role of speaking for municipalities being usurped as federal officials strengthened their direct links to the municipal government (Ontario 1).

New Forms of Governance?

By recognizing municipal interest in services for immigrants, the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement addressed some of the limitations inherent in municipal governance in Canada (Papillon 2002). It also created the potential for municipal involvement in decision-making. With the MOU, the City of Toronto hoped to deepen its relationship with senior levels of government and move toward government-to-government relations, rather than being treated as one of numerous stakeholders that are involved in negotiations at the discretion of senior governments.

The history of Toronto's involvement in COIA underscores the external and internal limitations on municipal involvement in the provision of services for immigrants (Good 2009). The City of Toronto became a signatory because of the confluence of specific policies, politics and politicians from all three levels of government. The impact of the agreement has been shaped by local, provincial, and federal officials' views concerning the appropriate municipal role in immigrant settlement and their long-term goals for municipal governance.

The Toronto experience illustrates the immigration challenges facing many municipalities in the current federation (Federation of Canadian Municipalities 2011). Still creatures of provincial governments, municipalities are assigned little power over settlement and immigration (Papillon 2002; Stasiulis, Hughes, and Amery 2011). Immigrants settle in cities but municipal governments still have a minor influence on policy-making about settlement services. The tripartite MOU did not change the power relations among the three levels of government. As a municipal government, the City is seen as an expert on the local community with whom the provincial and federal governments cooperate when it suits them; the City remains a subordinate level of government. The enhanced communication among the three levels of government is welcomed by all of them and it may facilitate more substantive devolution in the future as Andrew and Hima (2011) predicted. Since they wrote so optimistically, the City of Toronto increased its involvement in the Local Immigration Partnerships with the Toronto Newcomer Initiative 'a pilot initiative that explored ways for the City of Toronto to encourage the participation of newcomers in the life of the city and community' (City of Toronto, 2014). The city-wide LIP has a coordinating role, while the four LIPs that represent coalitions of immigrant-serving agencies are charged with planning effectively to improve settlement outcomes.

The municipal role has also been challenged by unilateral federal decisions. The power imbalances between the three levels of government were confirmed when unilateral cuts to funding for services in Ontario were followed by the federal government's decision to end settlement service agreements with British Columbia and Manitoba (CIC 2012). The failure to negotiate a new immigration agreement with Ontario after COIA expired in 2012 has underscored the federal government's role as the principal decision-maker concerning services for immigrants.

Although the municipal role is limited constitutionally and in practice, the municipality's conception of its own roles and responsibilities also constrains its involvement in services for immigrants. The municipal emphasis on providing services to all residents is deeply rooted in notions of the public that are central to contemporary planning practices (Wallace and Frisken 2000; Sandercock 2003; Good 2009). Even though municipal officials recognized the importance of settlement services for the successful integration of newcomers, they emphasized that the municipal government served all residents, not just immigrants. City officials argued that the City caters to immigrants by default since they are almost half of Toronto's population. This interpretation of the municipal mandate underpins the city's current acceptance of a consultative role regarding immigration and settlement policies and it encourages the largely coordinating role assumed by the Local Immigration Partnership led by the City of Toronto at the time of our research⁷. Additional research is needed to investigate why municipal planners and officials are so willing to overlook differences based in ethnicity, race, and place of birth, while they acknowledge the specific needs and interests of seniors, children and other age groups⁸. It would also be useful to evaluate how the City's involvement in immigrant services has changed as the activities of the Local Immigration Partnerships have moved from building partnerships to developing annual action plans for enhancing immigrant settlement (Wayland 2011).

The tripartite arrangement is evaluated very differently by the immigrant-serving sector than by the three levels of government that were satisfied with increased consultation. Representatives from the immigrant-serving sector were critical of the City's satisfaction with a consultative role (Services 2). The immigrant-serving sector sees that the federal and provincial governments still control the funding and mandates of programs. Despite its participation in consultations, the City cannot protect the sector's interests. This opinion was bolstered by the 2011 cuts in federal funding for settlement services that had more impact on agencies operating in the City of Toronto than others in the province (OCASI, 2011).

The case study is a singular example of federal and provincial collaboration with a municipal government and illustrates the challenges of cooperation in the current federation. The history of the tripartite agreement and its evaluation by representatives from all three levels of government and non-governmental organizations confirm that successful cooperation requires strong municipal leadership, a coordinating institution in which all parties are represented and a sustained commitment by all parties to cooperative rather than unilateral decision-making (Bradford, 2008; Evans, Richmond & Shields 2005; Good 2009; Vineberg, 2012). In the immigration area, senior governments recognize the importance of considering local circumstances. However, even with strong municipal leadership in negotiations surrounding the MOU and the consultation tables on which all three levels of government are represented, the federal government continues to act unilaterally, undoing much of the good will and trust fostered by COIA (OCASI, 2011). For the City of Toronto, the federal government's decisions about funding for settlement services has strong parallels with the earlier downloading of financial responsibility for social housing and other public services from the provincial government that occurred in the 1990s. In this unpredictable and contentious context, municipal caution about partnerships with senior levels of government is understandable and compounds the challenges of planning effective services for immigrants.

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Notes

¹ As Siegel (2009) notes, the City of Toronto is not a member of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. It argues that its large size and diverse population and economy require that it represent itself in advocacy and lobbying.

- ² In Quebec, some settlement services, particularly language training, are still provided by government offices.
- ³ The dates of the relevant records varied since the federal government signed the first immigration agreement with Quebec in 1991.
- ⁴ COIA also provides other Ontario municipalities with opportunities to express their interest in immigration issues and invites them to develop mechanisms that will provide municipalities with information about immigration and settlement policies through the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (Annex F: Partnerships and Municipalities, 2010).
- ⁵ Seventeen local immigration partnerships established initially were merged into the four quadrat LIPs and the city-wide LIP.
- ⁶ The agreement was recently renewed by the current federal government (Canadian Press, 2014).
- ⁷ The singular characteristics that encouraged Toronto's involvement in the MOU; its large immigrant population, a long history of immigrant settlement, and sustained municipal involvement in the provision of services for immigrants may also differentiate its experience of Local Immigration Partnerships (See Wayland 2011).
- ⁸ We are grateful to a reviewer for pointing out this contradiction.

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