



**GIVE A PLUM FOR A PEACH:
Chinese Business Immigration to Atlantic Canada**



JOHN HUANG

March 2007

Atlantic Institute for Market Studies

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Huang, from Shenzhen, China, is a new business immigrant to Nova Scotia under the Nova Scotia Nominee Program, landing in Halifax with his family in July 2006. In China, he worked for an agricultural products exporting company for many years, leading a sales team to promote and export agricultural products such as garlic, ginger, beans, and fruits all over the world. He obtained a bachelor's degree in Applied Physics in 1985, and in 1991 published a Chinese-language book on higher education in Canada. He is very experienced in international trade and ocean transportation issues, and is now the Atlantica Project Manager at the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies. He has also founded a trading company called Sino-Atlantic Inc., which conducts import and export business with China.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent decades, spurred by the forces of globalization, business immigrants have become an increasingly important factor in the development of the Canadian economy. Citizenship and Immigration Canada defines business-class immigrants as those with the ability to establish themselves economically in Canada through entrepreneurial activity, self-employment, or direct investment. Under federal immigration programs, business immigrants are expected to make a \$400,000 investment or to own and manage businesses in Canada; the various provinces have their own packages of thresholds and incentives.

In 2004, business immigrant entrepreneurs from all countries invested \$87.8 million in Canada, creating 886 full-time and 646 part-time jobs. Importantly, they bring knowledge of and connections in their homelands that are potentially transferable to the Canadian business environment. These immigrant families also benefit the Canadian economy directly, by purchasing homes, cars, and other consumer goods, paying taxes, and so on.

An increasingly important part of the flow of business-class immigrants is now coming from greater China — mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other parts of Asia. They are attracted by Canada's fresh air and beautiful landscapes, its peaceful and democratic system of government, its wealth and economic potential, and the generally welcoming hand Canada extends to newcomers. Chinese immigrants also value Canada's generous public services and comparatively high-quality post-secondary education system. Moreover, having a Canadian passport is an important consideration for those who wish to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the larger North American market.

Most Chinese newcomers, however, are attracted to the big cities of Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal; they are not bringing their skills and entrepreneurship to the Atlantic provinces. This dearth of new immigrants presents numerous economic difficulties for Atlantic Canada. Demographic changes to the region's population — Atlantic Canadians are aging rapidly and will soon begin to decline in absolute numbers — are leading to severe shortages of skilled labour in an increasingly wide variety of sectors, but particularly in the key computer-related and high-technology fields.

Despite government programs designed to encourage business immigration to the region, Chinese business immigrants have tended to shy away from Atlantic Canada for many interconnected business and personal reasons. These include the limited size of the local market; the difficulty of starting new businesses; the region's relatively high unemployment rates; linguistic and ethnic problems — the inability to receive help in Chinese at immigrant aid centres, for example; the difficulty of obtaining local work experience; the lack of local recognition of Chinese academic and professional credentials; the limited size of local business immigrant quotas and the long waiting list of



applicants in China; the lack of promotion of Atlantic Canada in China; the lack of effective coordination among settlement organizations; and difficulties with the operating principles of some immigration companies.

Attracting and retaining more Chinese business immigrants and integrating them more quickly into life in Atlantic Canada will require many improvements to current policies and practices, including better promotion of Atlantic Canada in China; higher quotas for business immigrants; more flexible policies for business immigration; enhanced coordination of related stakeholders; better integration mechanisms for immigrants; the hiring of more Chinese-speaking consultants by organizations such as the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association; encouraging immigrants to do more business on the Internet; and the hiring of more local sales staff and the building up of better local relationships and networks by Chinese entrepreneurs.

Such efforts would greatly enhance the economic stream of Chinese business immigrants to Atlantic Canada.

INTRODUCTION

Immigration has long been a national strategy to promote the development of productive forces in Canada. In recent decades, immigrants from greater China have become a major stream contributing to the Canadian economy; they now exceed 15 percent of all immigrants to Canada. Most Chinese immigrants live and work in the big cities of Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal. In the Atlantic provinces, however, despite the recognition of the economic importance of attracting more immigrants to the area, the increase in the number of immigrants from China has been far from stellar.

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to present an overview of Chinese business immigrants to Canada, to examine the reasons most choose not to come to the Atlantic provinces, and to suggest some policy changes that could help persuade more of them to come here and contribute to Atlantic Canada's economic future — to “give a plum for a peach,” in the ancient Chinese idiom.¹ The study is based on data collected by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and other resources, and on the personal experience of the author as a business immigrant from China to Atlantic Canada. Of course, many immigrants from other countries face the same challenges as Chinese immigrants do, so the findings presented in this study have a more widely applicable reference that could be useful as policymakers and stakeholders consider immigration issues.

In this paper, I adopt terms and definitions that CIC itself uses, as follows (see CIC 2004):

- *Economic immigrants*: permanent residents who are selected for their skills and ability to contribute to Canada's economy. The category includes skilled workers, business immigrants, provincial or territorial nominees, and live-in caregivers.
- *Business immigrants*: permanent residents in the economic immigrant category who are selected on the basis of their ability to establish themselves economically in Canada through entrepreneurial activity, self-employment, or direct investment. Business immigrants include entrepreneurs, self-employed people, and investors. The spouse or partner and the children of the business immigrant are also included in this category.
- *Entrepreneurs*: economic immigrants in the business immigrant category who are selected on the condition that they intend and have the ability to establish, purchase, or make a substantial investment in a business in Canada that will contribute significantly to the economy and create jobs.

¹ The idiom comes from *The Book of Songs*, China's first ancient poem collection, dating from the eleventh to the eighth centuries BC. The lines in the original poem read: “When one throws to me a peach,/I return to him a plum./To look for horns on a young ram/Will only weary you, my son.” Today, the idiom has the same meaning as “one good turn deserves another.”



- *Investors*: economic immigrants in the business immigrant category who are required to make a substantial investment in Canada that is allocated to participating provinces and territories for economic development and job creation.
- *Provincial or territorial nominees*: economic immigrants who are selected by a province or territory for specific skills that will contribute to the local economy to meet specific labour market needs. The regulations establish a provincial or territorial nominee class, allowing provinces and territories that have agreements with CIC to nominate a certain number of workers. A nominee must meet federal admissibility requirements, such as those related to health and security.
- *The self-employed*: economic immigrants in the business immigrant category who are selected on the condition that they can and intend to create their own employment in Canada and contribute significantly either to the Canadian economy or to the cultural or athletic life of Canada (as, for example, farmers, artists, actors, writers, or professional athletes).
- *Skilled workers*: economic immigrants who are selected for their ability to participate in the labour market and to establish themselves economically in Canada. Skilled workers are assessed on the basis of selection criteria that stress education, language ability, and skilled work experience rather than a specific occupation.

CHINESE BUSINESS IMMIGRANTS: AN OVERVIEW

Chinese have been immigrating to Canada since the gold rush in British Columbia in the 1850s. Between 1881 and 1884, approximately 17,000 Chinese men immigrated to Canada to work on building the Canadian Pacific Railway. By the late 1890s, records show Chinese-owned laundries operating in eastern cities such as Halifax, St. John's, and Saint John. Once Chinese workers were no longer needed to build the railway, however, the Canadian government brought in a notorious "head tax" law to discourage Chinese immigration. In 1923, a new immigration policy stopped all Chinese from coming to Canada. It was not until the 1940s that policy changed and Chinese Canadians were given the same rights as other Canadians (see Sterling 2005, 196–97).

Table 1: Top Ten Sources of Immigrants to Canada, 2005

Source Country	Number	% of Total	Rank
China	42,291	16.1	1
India	33,146	12.6	2
Philippines	17,525	6.7	3
Pakistan	13,576	5.2	4
United States	9,262	3.5	5
Colombia	6,031	2.3	6
United Kingdom	5,865	2.2	7
South Korea	5,819	2.2	8
Iran	5,502	2.1	9
France	5,430	2.1	10
Top 10	144,447	55.1	
Other countries	117,789	44.9	
<i>Total</i>	<i>262,236</i>	<i>100.0</i>	

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada web site: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pub/facts2005/permanent/12.html>.

After the Second World War, Chinese immigrants came mainly from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and south-east Asia. Since 2000, however, most have come from mainland China. From 1980 to 2001, a total of 786,257 Chinese immigrants landed in Canada, and China was the top source of immigrants to Canada for eight consecutive years from 1996 to 2005 (see Table A-1 in the Appendix). In 2005 alone, 42,291 immigrants came from China, accounting for 16 percent of new immigrants from all over the world (see Table 1).

Characteristics of Recent Chinese Immigrants to Canada

Chinese immigrants to Canada in the 1990s were well educated, with 19 percent having some form of post-secondary education — such as a formal trade certificate, a college certificate or diploma, or some non-degree university education — 13 percent possessing a bachelor's degree, 4 percent a master's degree, and 1 percent a doctorate.²

2 Indeed, of the 88,000 Chinese immigrants who came to Canada in the 1990s with secondary education or less, 74 percent were actually children 14 years of age and younger.

**Table 2: Chinese Immigrants in Canada, by Immigration Class, 1980–2000**

Immigration Class	Total Chinese		Total Immigrants
	(number)	(%)*	(%)*
<i>Economic</i>	430,592	54.0	37.9
1980s	91,671	42.7	
1990s	338,921	58.1	
Skilled workers & professionals	231,049	29.0	27.2
Self-employed	14,611	1.8	1.7
Entrepreneur & investor	152,124	19.1	6.8
<i>Family</i>	330,763	41.5	46.2
1980s	100,124	46.6	
1990s	230,639	39.6	
<i>Humanitarian</i>	36,298	4.6	16.0
1980s	22,995	10.7	
1990s	13,303	2.3	

* The percentage sum of the items in italic equals 100, as do the sums for the 1980s and 1990s.

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2001.

Moreover, the Chinese who arrived in the 1990s possessed higher educational qualifications than those who came in the previous decade (see Figure 1). In terms of their demographic characteristics, 47.9 percent of Chinese immigrants to Canada over the 1980–2000 period were male and 53.2 percent were married, 25.6 percent were less than 20 years of age, 65.4 percent were between 20 and 59, and 9 percent were 60 or older. Thus, most Chinese immigrants during the period were of working age.

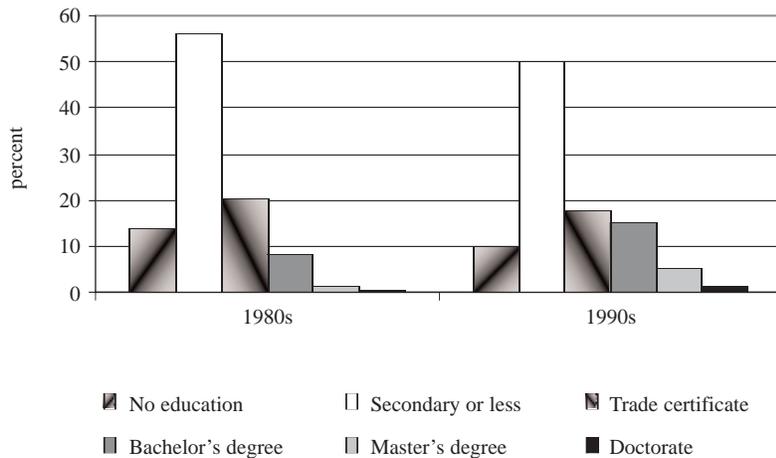
There are three classes of immigrants to Canada: family, economic, and humanitarian (refugees and others). As Table 2 shows, compared with the general immigrant population, a much higher proportion of Chinese immigrants over the 1980–2000 period entered under the economic class (54 percent vs 38 percent); the proportion of entrepreneurs and investors among the Chinese was also higher (19 percent vs 7 percent). At the same time, a significantly lower proportion of Chinese immigrants entered under the humanitarian class than was the case among the general immigrant population (5 percent vs 16 percent).

Of particular interest are those who enter under one of the three classes of business immigrants: investors, entrepreneurs, and self-employed persons. Canada encourages the admission of business people whose business skills and capital will contribute to the nation's economy and create job opportunities. Under federal immigration programs, business immigrants are expected to make a \$400,000 investment or to own and manage businesses in Canada.³

East Asian countries are the top sources of business immigration to Canada, and the number of such immigrants is rising rapidly. In 2005, Asian business immigrants to Canada — 89 percent of whom came from China, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan — increased by 57 percent from the previous year. The rise in immigrants from China — up 58 percent from 2004 — accounted for the bulk of the increase. In 2004, business immigrant entrepreneurs from all countries invested \$87.8 million in Canada, creating 886 full-time and 646 part-time jobs. They bring knowledge of and connections in their homelands that are potentially transferable to the Canadian business environment. Added

3 See CIC, “What Is the Business Immigration Program?”; available at web site: <<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/business/index.html>>.

Figure 1: Chinese Immigrants in Canada, by Educational Qualification, 1980–2000



Source: CIC, *Facts and Figures*; web site: <<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/facts2005.pdf>>.

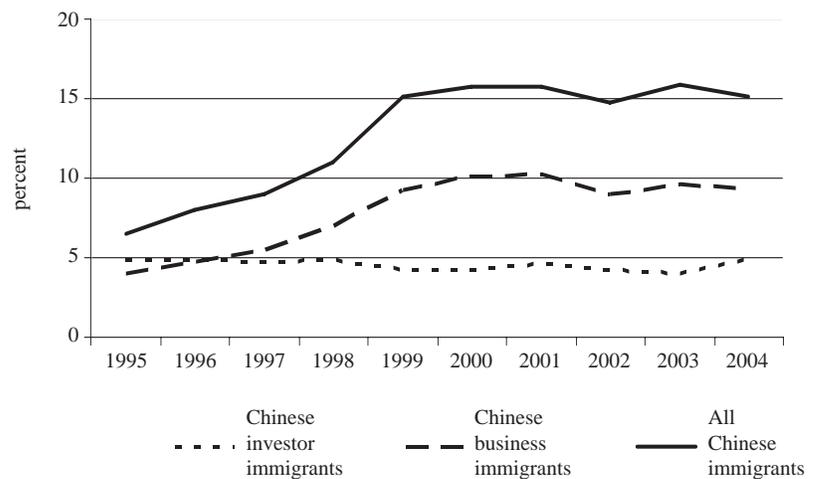
to this are other benefits to the Canadian economy, as these families purchase homes, cars, and furniture, pay taxes, and so on. Moreover, CIC reports that, among Chinese immigrants, the number of those in the investor class has been increasing since 1995, while the number of those in other classes has declined (see Figure 2 and Table A-2 in the Appendix).

The Reasons Chinese Business Immigrants Choose Canada

Chinese business immigrants choose Canada for a variety of reasons. One is this country's *relatively flexible immigration laws*. Canada not only welcomes overseas immigrants; it also has, compared with the United States, European countries, Australia, and New Zealand, a lower threshold in terms of money and other conditions over which Chinese applicants must step. For example, the potential investor immigrant to the United States under that country's EB-5 visa threshold must invest US\$1million and create a minimum of ten jobs in order to qualify. This is much higher than the investment amount required by either federal or provincial immigration programs in Canada.

A second reason is Canada's *desirability as a place to live*. Potential Chinese immigrants find Canada's fresh air, beautiful landscapes, few natural disasters, low crime rate, lack of a conscript armed forces, rich natural resources, healthy economy, and development potential highly attractive.

Figure 2: Chinese Business Immigrants to Canada, 1995–2004



Source: CIC, *Facts and Figures*; web site: <<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/facts2005.pdf>>.



Moreover, the country has a stable, democratic political system in which “the law is king.” Canada also encourages multicultural co-existence⁴ and has relatively little racial discrimination compared with most countries. Importantly, immigrants have the same right to work as Canadian citizens.

Another reason Chinese immigrants choose Canada is its *generous public services* — including the medical and pension systems — which are much better than China’s.

Also important is the value of having a *Canadian passport*, with which it is easy to go to many countries in the world. In particular, since Canada borders on the United States, it is far easier for Canadian citizens or residents to travel there than to apply for a visa from China — an important consideration for business immigrants from China who wish to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the larger North American market.

Finally, Chinese immigrants are attracted by Canada’s relatively solid *post-secondary education system*. Many Chinese families dream of sending their children to the best universities in North America, a dream difficult to realize in China because of the high costs, the strong competition among foreign students for places in North American universities, language difficulties, and the difficulty of obtaining visas. Immigrant children studying in Canadian schools, however, face easier access to universities and colleges in both Canada and the United States, easier recognition of their secondary school credentials, comparatively less competition than in China, no language difficulties, and relatively much lower costs. All these factors have become important incentives that encourage affluent Chinese to immigrate to Canada.

Reasons such as these have attracted thousands of economic immigrants from China over the years. Recently, there has been a decline in the number of applications submitted to the Canadian embassy in China, mainly because of improved living conditions in China and the long waiting time applicants have to endure (see Jimenez 2006), but the overall number of immigrants from China to Canada is still large.

4 For example, Chinese is now the third most commonly used language in the country.

IMMIGRATION TO ATLANTIC CANADA

The four Atlantic provinces traditionally have been significantly poorer than the rest of Canada, although offshore oil and gas wealth has begun to flow in — at least for Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. The region also faces serious demographic problems: its population is getting older — in 20 years' time, Nova Scotia's population, for example, will exceed an average age of 55 — and growing only slowly compared with other parts of the country. Labour shortages are now occurring in many sectors, and the business community badly needs salespersons and business development personnel, computer programmers, information technology specialists, medical lab technicians, physicians, and engineers, among many other skilled occupations. Moreover, Atlantic Canada does not have the same degree of cultural diversity that other parts of Canada enjoy.

Hence, there is considerable demand for a fresh stream of skilled immigrant workers and business investors with a strong work ethic and knowledge of overseas markets who can help the Atlantic provinces improve their access to export markets. The importance of attracting such people has been recognized by Ottawa and the four provincial governments.⁵

Existing Provincial Immigration Programs

In addition to the three classes of federal economic immigrants noted above (investors, entrepreneurs, and self-employed), provincial governments have established Provincial Nominee Programs (PNPs) to attract business immigrants worldwide.⁶ For example, the Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP) assists immigrants wishing to work and live in that province,⁷ and until recently offered assistance in two distinct categories: a “skilled worker stream” to fill areas in which skill shortages exist and an “economic stream” to attract experienced managers and business owners (the latter was suspended in June 2006).

5 On August 9, 2006, Monte Solberg, Canada's Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, met in Halifax with the four Atlantic ministers responsible for immigration to explore ways of working together to increase the number of immigrants to Atlantic Canada. For details, see the CIC news release at web site: <<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/press/06/0608-e.html>>.

6 According to Welltrend, an immigration company in China, the refusal rate under provincial PNPs is much lower than under the federal program. For example, the federal government refuses about 20 percent of applicants, while no applicants have yet been refused under the PEI program.

7 In the past three years, 87 percent of the 1621 families that immigrated to Nova Scotia applied under the NSNP economic stream, contributing more than \$140 million to the Nova Scotia business community (see Table A-3). For details of the NSNP program, see the web site: <<http://www.novascotiaimmigration.com/nsnp>>.



Similar programs exist in the other three Atlantic provinces. New Brunswick's rather strict program requires not only that business immigrants invest at least \$128,000, but also that they stay in the province for at least two years.⁸ In Prince Edward Island, entrepreneur-class immigrants are asked to invest \$200,000 to establish a new enterprise or to purchase no less than 33 percent of an existing business, with a payment of a \$100,000 business investment deposit to be held in escrow and returned after one year's residency and the establishment of the business. Such immigrants are also required to pay a \$25,000 "good faith deposit" and a \$20,000 "language deposit," both of which are refundable after one year's stay and a demonstration of good language skills.⁹ Newfoundland and Labrador requires a minimum investment of \$200,000 within the Greater St. John's region or \$100,000 elsewhere, plus a conditionally refundable "good faith deposit" of \$25,000.¹⁰

These investment thresholds convey a competitive advantage in attracting entrepreneurial immigrants to Atlantic Canada not only over the United States, where thresholds are significantly higher, but over other provinces in Canada where the investment expectations are higher, but not exorbitantly so. For instance, the investment expectation in Manitoba is \$150,000, in British Columbia \$300,000, and in Quebec \$400,000. With thresholds in the \$100,000–\$200,000 range, Atlantic Canada is priced not only appropriately in the international marketplace for entrepreneurial immigrants but also reasonably close to, yet measurably better than, other parts of Canada. Combining this intelligent pricing with the various "good faith deposits" is also a reasonable approach to reducing the risk that investors will buy their way into Atlantic Canada at relatively low cost, in the expectation of migrating quickly to another province.

The Attraction of Big Cities for Chinese Immigrants

The great majority (nearly 87 percent) of Chinese to immigrants to Canada settle in the five big cities of Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Calgary, and Edmonton (see Table 3, which is an abstract of Table A-4 in the Appendix). Compared with other cities, Montreal attracts more young immigrants,¹¹ while Calgary and Edmonton are the choice of older immigrants. At the same time, only 0.5 percent of Chinese

8 New Brunswick's PNP is, however, having some success attracting Chinese immigrant investors under a provision that allows potential immigrant investors to submit a business plan jointly with a local New Brunswick company. With New Brunswick government approval, the local company may receive a net investment of no less than \$60,000 from the immigrant investor, who then may become a shareholder of the proposed project or of the company which he or she invests. Such a flexible approach may make it easier for small and medium-sized local companies to obtain foreign direct investment, which would stimulate the development of the local economy. The amount of the required investment is also smaller under this program, which could encourage more immigrant investors to come. New Brunswick's experience in this area may provide lessons for other Atlantic provinces.

9 See the PEI government web site, at: <<http://www.gov.pe.ca/immigration/index.php3?number=1014389&lang=E>>.

10 See Brian Edward Tadayoshi Tsuji, "Newfoundland and Labrador Business PNP"; available at web site: <http://www.immigratingtocanada.com/immigration_provincial_newfoundland.html>.

11 Quebec's less strict immigration policy means that, for some Chinese immigrants, Montreal is a stepping stone for settling down in other Canadian cities.

Table 3: Chinese Immigrants in Canada, by Intended Destination, 1980–2000

Intended Destination	Total Chinese	
	(number)	(%)
Toronto	311,929	39.7
Vancouver	242,089	30.8
Montreal	62,300	7.9
Calgary	34,744	4.4
Edmonton	31,556	4.0
Subtotal	682,618	86.8
Halifax	3927	0.5
Canada	786,257	100.0

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2001.

Table 4: Immigrants to Nova Scotia, by Category, 2004–06

	2004	2005	2006
Family class, total	133	137	94
from China	22	29	17
Skilled workers, total	239	245	150
from China	79	81	17
Business class, total	44	73	164
from China	1	4	8

Source: Unpublished data from the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association.

immigrants choose to come to Halifax, while immigration to other parts of Atlantic Canada is not even mentioned in CIC’s data. Moreover, although China is the main source of immigrants to Nova Scotia (see Table 4), the percentage of Chinese business immigrants among all business immigrants to the province is tiny (2.27 percent in 2004, 5.48 percent in 2005, and 4.88 percent in 2006 — see Table 5).

Most Chinese immigrants tend to choose big cities for several reasons. The first is historical: the relatively strong economies of British Columbia and Ontario attracted early waves of Chinese immigrants who formed the basis for the emergence of Chinese ethnic enclaves in the late nineteenth century (see Xu and Liaw 2003). The continued economic strength of these two provinces and the benefits offered by the pre-existing Chinese enclaves there continue to attract more immigrants with a Chinese cultural background.

The second reason is cultural: Chinese people prefer to live together in a relationship network called *guanxiwang*. Big cities like Vancouver and Toronto have districts where Chinese people can find and establish their *guanxiwang* more easily than elsewhere. In such areas, Chinese food is served widely, big banks offer Chinese-language services, drivers’ licence examinations can be taken in Chinese, and even TV channels are available in Chinese. In addition, Chinese relatives and the co-ethnic community can provide valuable ben-

efits to newly arrived immigrants in many ways, including employment for those who cannot yet speak English.

The third reason is economic: for Chinese business- class immigrants, in particular, opportunities for both doing business and seeking employment are much greater in the five main cities than in other places in Canada.

Thus, there is a strong preference among Chinese economic immigrants to settle in big multicultural cities, and this preference can be expected to continue in the foreseeable future if current immigration patterns become entrenched.

**Table 5: Top Ten Sources of Immigrants to Nova Scotia, 2004–06**

2004	Number	2005	Number	2006 (to Sept. 30)	Number
China	103	China	112	China	42
Egypt	31	Iran	23	South Korea	19
Jordan	24	Egypt	20	Iran	19
India	20	Jordan	19	Iraq	10
Lebanon	19	India	19	India	10
Pakistan	17	South Korea	18	Egypt	9
Former Yugoslavia	16	Lebanon	14	Lebanon	9
South Korea	16	Syria	10	Colombia	9
Cuba	15	Pakistan	9	Pakistan	7
Russia	14	Former Yugoslavia	8	Jordan	6
Total	464	Total	496	Total	447

Source: Source: Unpublished data from the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association.

Why Are Chinese Not Coming to the Atlantic Provinces?

In addition to the factors that attract Chinese immigrants to Canada’s big cities, there are several reasons Chinese business immigrants, in particular, choose not to come to Atlantic Canada.

First, the Atlantic Canadian market is considerably smaller than markets in other, more developed provinces, so business opportunities are much fewer in the Atlantic provinces. For new business immigrants from China, the relatively small size of the market in Atlantic Canada limits both the volume of imports and potential sales to local people. Some immigrants find that, while Atlantic Canadians are hospitable, they tend to choose local sellers even if the newcomer’s products are more competitive. In the retail sector, local small Chinese-owned trading companies find it difficult to compete with trading companies based in Toronto. The export sector — especially for fishery products — is dominated by local dealers, leaving little space for new business immigrants to share.

Second, the relatively high unemployment rates in the Atlantic provinces make it more difficult for new immigrants to find work here than elsewhere in Canada. Many Chinese immigrants expect to work in the same field as they did in China, only to experience downward occupational mobility once they arrive in Canada. Some immigrants arrive in Atlantic Canada but later leave in search of better job opportunities in other provinces. Others who remain face rising anxiety levels in their search for satisfactory employment and misgivings about their decision to come here. Chinese students at Atlantic Canadian universities also tend not to stay after graduation — an informal survey

by this author among Chinese students in Halifax reveals that about 35 percent intend to go back to China after graduation, while fewer than 20 percent expect to remain in Nova Scotia. Data from the Association of Atlantic Universities suggest that only about 26 percent of students from outside the region remain here after graduation.

Third, in the Atlantic provinces, there is no cultural environment like the Chinese districts in big cities such as Vancouver and Toronto. Thus, the big differences in language, social psychology, culture, lifestyle, and ethnic values that newcomers face may enhance their feelings of frustration. For many immigrants, their new life here is like a process of rebirth; for some, the unfamiliar environment even leads to mental health problems. Chinese business immigrants face additional difficulties with unfamiliar local laws, tax regulations, accounting systems, and so on. The absence of direct, non-stop flights between Atlantic Canada and China also makes travel back home more difficult for Chinese immigrants. Moreover, some local people in the Atlantic provinces have a strong conceptual bias against immigrants and practise “intangible discrimination” toward them. Instead of seeing immigrants as a new economic stream that brings in benefits, some tend to view them as competitors for job and business opportunities. Immigrants from countries less well integrated into the global banking system complain that Canadian financial institutions are reluctant to recognize their credit histories, while insurance companies tend to charge higher interest rates on their house and car purchases (see Rebelo 2006). Such kinds of bias and barriers have a very negative impact on new Chinese immigrants.

A fourth problem immigrants face is the non-recognition or devaluation of their Chinese educational and professional qualifications and work experience. For many, learning Canadian standards and gaining experience in a Canadian workplace is a significant challenge (see Zong 2006). Many experience downward occupational mobility or must enter a local college or university to acquire the necessary Canadian accreditation or local working licence, thus wasting the human capital resources of both Canada and China. Recently, some provinces (Quebec among them) have started recognizing Chinese degrees and credentials, but the Atlantic provinces have not yet taken this step.

A fifth problem potential Chinese business immigrants face is the limited quota Canada places on them and the long waiting list they must endure before being allowed to come here. In fact, many successful Chinese entrepreneurs want to immigrate to Canada, and some are rich enough that they do not need to make money as soon as they arrive. Such people might be attracted by Atlantic Canada’s beautiful environment and relatively low house prices; some might even prefer a place without many Chinese people so that their children obtain an education in a purely English-language environment. But Nova Scotia’s quota, for example, is limited to just 400 business-class immigrants from the whole world in 2007, and the provincial government has had to suspend accepting new applications since July 1, 2006. Meanwhile, in China, the waiting list under federal immigration programs is as long as five or six years, causing many applicants to lose patience and simply withdraw — an important reason for the recent decline in the number of Chinese immigrants involved in the federal and Quebec investor programs (Jimenez 2006).



A sixth problem is that Atlantic Canada is a relatively unknown region in China. Everyone in China knows Canada, many know Toronto and Vancouver, but hardly anyone knows much about the Atlantic provinces. Chinese-language web sites about Toronto and Vancouver are common, but among the Atlantic provinces, only New Brunswick maintains a web site in Chinese.

A seventh problem is a lack of coordination between governments in Atlantic Canada and third parties. For example, Cornwallis Financial Corporation, in an agreement with the Nova Scotia provincial government, undertook considerable promotional work in China on behalf of the Nova Scotia Nominee Program. That agreement was terminated on July 1, 2006, however, and the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration has assumed full responsibility for the program.¹² It remains to be seen whether it will continue the promotional work previously undertaken by Cornwallis. Coordination problems also exist among organizations that provide immigration-related services and resources to newcomers to the Atlantic region. Often, these organizations are unable to meet the demand for their services because they lack adequate resources or, in some cases, because services and information are simply not available to Chinese business immigrants. At the same time, lack of coordination sometimes leads to a duplication of effort among these organizations.

A final reason Chinese immigrants are not coming to Atlantic Canada is the irresponsible approach of some immigration companies, which lure potential immigrants with assurances that Canada is a “perfect dreamland” without also informing them of the risks and challenges of moving to a new environment. Some immigration agents and companies misguide immigrants by providing false or wrong information.¹³ Many new immigrants thus face problems they did not foresee prior to landing, leading them to feel deeply frustrated and wanting to go back to China or elsewhere in Canada.

12 The reason for the termination of this agreement, according to the Nova Scotia Immigration Office, is that the province’s quota of business immigrants is full; for details, see the web site: <http://www.novascotiainmigration.com/nsnp/docs/FAQs_August_1_2006.doc>.

13 For personal accounts of the irresponsible practices of some Chinese immigration companies, see the web site: <http://www.51ielts.com/disp.asp?num=46123&news_class=>>.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Given the problems and barriers Chinese immigrants face in the Atlantic provinces relative to other parts of Canada, we have to think of some ways of “swimming against the current.” Below are some strategic and tactical initiatives and recommendations for attracting, integrating, and retaining more Chinese business immigrants in the Atlantic region.

Increase the Promotion of Atlantic Canada

The Atlantic provinces need to promote themselves more actively in China. Such promotion activities might include:

- enhancing cooperation with appropriate organizations or immigration agents in Canada and China;
- creating introductory promotional web sites about Atlantic Canada in Chinese and promoting them in China;
- educating Canadian embassy staff and international agents in China about the Atlantic provinces’ interest in attracting immigrants;
- cooperating with reputable companies to hold more immigration-related seminars and fairs, and encouraging more promotional visits to China by government and business envoys; and
- promoting the idea of immigration to Atlantic Canada among Chinese studying in the region’s universities and among their families in China.

Increase the Quotas for Business Immigrants

The quotas currently in place for business-class immigrants to Atlantic Canada (400 under the Nova Scotia Provincial Nominee Program, for example) are far from large enough either to meet demand in the Atlantic provinces for more economic immigrants or to satisfy the long waiting list in China. To address this issue, provincial governments should try to impress upon the federal government the importance of the need for more immigration and persuade Ottawa to increase quotas for the Atlantic provinces to help stimulate their economic development.

Give a Plum for a Peach



Make Immigration Policies More Flexible

The distribution of economic well-being in the Atlantic provinces is highly uneven. In Nova Scotia, for example, the provincial unemployment rate is as high as 8.4 percent, yet in the Halifax area it is considerably lower: 5.2 percent in July 2006, 1.2 percentage points lower than the national average, and the lowest in the Atlantic region. Given this disparity, governments are exploring methods to encourage immigrants to focus their settlement patterns in communities that are considered to be in most immediate need of new growth. While attempts to target immigration in this manner are questionable at best, broad-based policies that encourage some options while leaving all options within reach are preferable to specific settlement requirements that leave immigrants with little or no flexibility.

For example, Newfoundland and Labrador has already initiated a flexible and interesting policy along these lines. In that province, a business immigrant who wishes to settle in the St. John's region is required to make a minimum investment \$200,000, but only \$100,000 if the immigrant settles elsewhere in the province. Nova Scotia could consider a similar program where the mandatory length of a contract of employment between the immigrant investor and the host company is expanded from six to twelve months for immigrants willing to settle in areas outside Halifax. This model of investment tied to contract of employment is an interesting method of achieving multiple objectives: securing new capital investment; sharing the immigration risk among the immigrant, the province, and the host company; ensuring some immediate integration of the immigrant into his or her new community; ensuring the immigrant meets an existing need within the economy; and having a potential employer verifying the immigrant's actual qualifications and ability.

More flexibility should also be introduced in recognizing the educational and professional qualifications of immigrants. Under Canada's "points system" for skilled immigrant workers, the applicant's working experience is considered a major qualifying factor, but the immigrant arrives in Canada only to discover that his degrees, diplomas, and working certificates obtained abroad are not recognized here. This is a contradiction. Many foreign credentials — in fields such as engineering, for example — are of a similar level of professionalism to those obtained in Canada, and professional associations in this country should examine and assess these credentials fairly. Doing so would prevent unnecessary "brain loss" and help new economic immigrants to settle down more quickly. In addition, guiding and helping Chinese students who graduate from Atlantic Canadian universities to apply for working visas could help satisfy local demand for skilled labour.

Flexible policies also need to be introduced to fine-tune immigrants' selection and placement schemes, so that less-educated immigrants with specific skills can be fitted into economic niches in economically weaker municipalities or areas. For example, when interviewing multi-qualified applicants, immigration officers in provinces with limited quotas should give priority to those with better English-language skills, to make the future immigrant's integration process easier. In choosing between immigrants with similar levels of English competency and other factors, preference should be given to immigrants with verified job offers or with skills that match those identified in a dynamic database of identified skills shortages. This would be very different from the current points system

in that the data base would consist of actual job vacancies identified by employers and would value immigrants on the basis of their fit with a specific province's economy, rather than on a notional valuation of their skills alone. Perhaps the best analogy would be that of manpower services, with the ranking of immigrants being an almost simultaneous exercise in job placement.

Enhance the Coordination of Related Stakeholders

Many stakeholders are involved in immigration service work: federal, provincial, and municipal governments or government agents such as CIC, the Halifax Regional Municipality, and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency; settlement organizations such as the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association, the Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre, and the YMCA; employers; trade and labour associations; economic development organizations such as chambers of commerce, the Greater Halifax Partnership, Nova Scotia Business Inc., and the Halifax Regional Development Agency; multicultural and religious organizations such as the Chinese Society of Nova Scotia and the Chinese Christian Church; and, not least, immigrants and international students themselves.

Together, these disparate public and private stakeholders should form an organic infrastructure to embrace immigrants from China and other countries. They need to coordinate with each other effectively to make services available that enable economic immigrants to integrate into the mainstream of the local society and economy as quickly as possible. These groups and organizations also need to understand the reasons for the initial destination choices of new business immigrants. Effective coordination and the active exchange of information among these stakeholders could also enhance the quantity and quality of Chinese business immigrants in less well off areas and facilitate a more balanced economic development across the provinces.

One example of such coordination is choosing the right partners for government. Obviously, limited personnel resources make it impossible for government immigration offices to conduct large-scale promotion activities abroad, but it might not be a good idea to authorize one single non-governmental organization or company to do the complete job — the unpleasant termination of Nova Scotia's cooperation with Cornwallis should warn against such a strategy. A more flexible and effective way approach would be for provincial governments to authorize a limited number of qualified organizations to do the promotional work, while closely watching and supervising the progress of each authorized party. This way, governments would be able to focus on higher-level strategic planning and management activities without sacrificing promotional effectiveness; they might also avoid the potential misuse of government resources, claims from peer groups that nominee-accepting companies are not fairly appointed, financial disputes, and so on.



Establish and Enhance Integration Mechanisms

More effective coordination among stakeholders would make it possible to establish and enhance some key mechanisms for integrating Chinese business immigrants into the local community and then persuading them to remain in the region. Examples of such mechanisms include improving:

- English-language programs and sector-based professional English training;
- access to professional licences;
- training programs in different sectors to help new immigrants meet Canadian standards;
- credential assessment services;
- workplace internships and mentoring;
- cultural awareness and diversity training;
- social, financial, and legal consultation;
- access to employment- and business-related information web sites and guidance;
- access to business and professional networking opportunities; and
- public awareness of immigration issues.

Such initiatives could enhance Atlantic Canada's reputation in immigrants' hometowns in China as a good place in which to live and work, potentially attracting more new immigrants in the future.

Some Suggestions for MISA

In Nova Scotia, the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) has been the most important organization helping new Chinese immigrants integrate into the local community. MISA has done good work in offering assistance in employment, language assessment, settlement, cultural awareness, and volunteer opportunities. Yet, although China has ranked as the top source of immigrants to Nova Scotia for the past three years, MISA does not have a single full-time Chinese-language customer service person on staff, making it difficult for Chinese immigrants whose English is not good to understand and use MISA's services, which are critical in the early stages of an immigrant's life in the new country.

Although English-language education allows many people in China to read and write English well, spoken English presents particular difficulties. Thus, having a Chinese-speaking consultant on staff at MISA would be very helpful to a considerable number of Chinese immigrants who want to work or do business here. The consultant could set up meetings with newcomers or — to borrow a technique from IT companies that has proven to be a highly effective way to help customers solve problems — sponsor an on-line “live chat” program on MISA's web site. Such an on-line program would permit Chinese immigrants to obtain guidance or services directly from their home even if their spoken English is poor.

Some Suggestions for Chinese Business Immigrants

Chinese business immigrants themselves could do more to help themselves integrate better and more quickly into life in Atlantic Canada. For example, they could try to do more business on-line. As the size of the Atlantic Canadian market is rather small, the Internet offers a constructive way for new immigrants to develop their own businesses and to access larger markets. There are many successful examples of small companies in comparatively remote cities that handle large national and international sales on-line. The Internet also allows immigrants who cannot afford to buy an expensive house in a big city to enjoy a comfortable life in relatively less expensive Atlantic Canada.

As for local sales, Chinese business immigrants should consider using more local people as sales personnel, instead of trying to sell their products themselves. This has been a successful experience of some earlier business immigrants here. Competitive products plus local sales staff can result in quicker access to the local market and a bigger market share.

Culturally, the Chinese community is not yet large enough for *guanxi* to have become established in Atlantic Canada. Nevertheless, Chinese business immigrants still need to build up relationships and networks with local people in order to promote and expand their new business. Be brave, ask questions, learn more about local business culture, make more friends. All these are constructive ways for new business immigrants from China to conduct a successful business in Atlantic Canada.



CONCLUSION

Globalization is leading more business immigrants from China to settle in Canada, but most choose to live in big cities in Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia, where they find more opportunities for work and business and more of life's conveniences. Seldom do Chinese choose to come to Atlantic Canada, however, for many reasons. These include a mix of national and regional issues such as the limited size of the local market, the difficulty of starting a new business, relatively high unemployment rates, linguistic and ethnic problems, the difficulty of obtaining local work experience, the lack of recognition of Chinese academic and professional credentials, the limited size of local business immigrant quotas and the long waiting list of applicants in China waiting for permission to come to Canada, the lack of promotion of Atlantic Canada in China, the lack of effective coordination among settlement organizations, the irresponsibility of some immigration companies, and so on.

Attracting and retaining more Chinese business immigrants and integrating them more quickly into life in Atlantic Canada will require many improvements to current policies and practices, including better promotion of Atlantic Canada in China, higher quotas for business immigrants, more flexible policies for business immigration, enhanced coordination of related stakeholders, better integration mechanisms for immigrants, the hiring of more Chinese-speaking consultants by organizations such as MISA, encouraging immigrants to do more business on the Internet, and the hiring of more local sales staff and the building up of better local relationships and networks by Chinese entrepreneurs. Such efforts would greatly enhance the economic stream of Chinese business immigrants to Atlantic Canada.

APPENDIX TABLES

Table A-1: Permanent Residents in Canada, by Top Source Countries, 1996–2005

Source Country	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
	<i>(number)</i>									
China	17,533	18,526	19,790	29,150	36,750	40,365	33,307	36,256	36,429	42,291
India	21,291	19,615	15,376	17,458	26,126	27,904	28,838	24,593	25,576	33,146
Philippines	13,158	10,872	8185	9204	10,119	12,928	11,011	11,989	13,303	17,525
Pakistan	7761	11,239	8091	9303	14,202	15,354	14,172	12,351	12,795	13,576
United States	5850	5030	4776	5532	5828	5911	5293	6013	7507	9262
Colombia	362	571	922	1295	2228	2967	3226	4273	4438	6031
United Kingdom	5593	4657	3899	4478	4649	5360	4725	5199	6062	5865
South Korea	3157	4001	4917	7217	7639	9608	7334	7089	5337	5819
Iran	5833	7486	6775	5909	5617	5746	7889	5652	6063	5502
France	3363	2858	3867	3923	4345	4427	3963	4127	5028	5430
Romania	3670	3916	2976	3468	4431	5589	5688	5466	5658	4964
Sri Lanka	6159	5071	3329	4728	5849	5520	4968	4448	4135	4690
Russia	2464	3735	4304	3782	3523	4073	3677	3520	3685	3607
Taiwan	13,225	13,324	7193	5483	3535	3114	2910	2126	1992	3092
Hong Kong	29,988	22,250	8087	3671	2865	1965	1541	1472	1547	1784
Former Yugoslavia	1831	1384	1172	1492	4745	2804	1623	941	708	272
Top 10 source countries	126,391	118,070	87,494	98,462	121,524	134,285	123,225	119,056	123,758	144,447
Other countries	99,681	97,968	86,704	91,499	105,939	116,355	105,822	102,296	112,066	117,789
Total	226,072	216,038	174,198	189,961	227,463	250,640	229,047	221,352	235,824	262,236

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada web site: <<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pub/facts2005/permanent/12.html>>.

**Table A-2: Business-Class Immigrants to Canada from Asia, 2001–05**

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
	<i>(number)</i>				
Bangladesh	129	96	65	170	285
China	4189	2802	1864	3,603	5684
Hong Kong	473	379	172	207	322
India	328	356	272	176	224
Japan	61	26	13	32	75
Pakistan	963	544	265	217	289
Philippines	26	43	19	43	210
South Korea	1919	1746	1398	1,084	1516
Sri Lanka	10	19	6	11	—
Taiwan	1186	919	597	714	1218
Vietnam	6	10	1	9	6
Total	9290	6940	4672	6,266	9829

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada web site: <<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pub/facts2005/permanent/12.html>>.

Table A-3: The Nova Scotia Nominee Program, 2003–05

Accomplishments Summary	2003	2004	2005	Total
	<i>(number)</i>			
Applications received	163	435	1023	1621
Approved nomination certificates issued	42	213	427	682
Approved nomination certificates in process	23	54	82	159
Applications in process	72	130	409	611
Refused or withdrawn	26	38	105	169
Canadian resident visas issued	6	51	173	230

Source: Nova Scotia Office of Immigration.

**Table A-4: Chinese Immigrants in Canada,
by Origin and Intended Destination, 1980–2000**

Intended Destination	Origin of Immigrants							
	Mainland China		Hong Kong		Taiwan		Total Chinese	
	(number)	(%)	(number)	(%)	(number)	(%)	(number)	(%)
Toronto	89,653	41.3	162,361	45.1	19,932	21.4	311,929	39.7
Vancouver	55,003	25.3	106,624	29.6	56,039	60.2	242,089	30.8
Montreal	15,806	7.3	27,378	7.6	9181	9.9	62,300	7.9
Calgary	8344	3.8	16,656	4.6	2387	2.6	34,744	4.4
Edmonton	6929	3.2	14,599	4.1	975	1.0	31,556	4.0
Ottawa	9184	4.2	4844	1.3	544	0.6	18,064	2.3
Winnipeg	3658	1.7	4696	1.3	373	0.4	12,065	1.5
Hamilton	2710	1.2	2374	0.7	412	0.4	7224	0.9
Victoria	2343	1.1	1589	0.4	302	0.3	4964	0.6
Regina	1043	0.5	2167	0.6	336	0.4	4334	0.6
Saskatoon	1783	0.8	1269	0.4	166	0.2	4102	0.5
London	1669	0.8	1412	0.4	158	0.2	4205	0.5
Halifax	1458	0.7	1632	0.5	307	0.3	3927	0.5
Quebec City	871	0.4	201	0.1	122	0.1	1671	0.2
Subtotal	200,481	92.4	347,802	96.5	91,234	98.0	743,174	94.5
Canada	217,030	100.0	360,277	100.0	93,077	100.0	786,257	100.0

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2001.



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