Climate Change & Immigration in Newfoundland & Labrador

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- Newfoundland and Labrador has a declining and aging population[1].

- First-generation immigrants make up just 2.5% of Newfoundland and Labrador's population; the national average is 22%[1].

- According to the International Organization for Migration, an estimated 25 million to 1 billion people will become climate migrants or climate refugees by 2050[2].

- It is difficult to pinpoint what the exact impacts of climate change may be to immigration in Newfoundland and Labrador as there is no model that can predict or account for all the factors that influence migration decisions, such as individual, economic, political, social, environmental, and demographic factors[4].

- However, there is robust evidence of disasters displacing people worldwide and of planned relocation happening in low-lying zones exposed to impacts of coastal hazards[4].

Climate change will impact human mobility across the world in three main dimensions: migration, displacement, and planned relocation[3].

Who Can Receive Refugee Status?

- Refugees come to Canada in one of two ways: they are either selected while abroad to receive a permanent resident visa in Canada, or they come to Canada independently and claim protection after entering the country[6].

- A Convention Refugee is a legal definition used in Canada to refer to someone who meets the definition of refugee according to the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

- To meet this definition, a person must have a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.

- Under current law, environmental reasons do not qualify a person as a Convention Refugee[6].

How Can We Plan for this Impact?

- Climate change-induced mobility generally impacts social networks, access to services and economic & social opportunities, among various other indicators of wellbeing[4]. If Newfoundland & Labrador wishes to attract and retain newcomers in the face of increased immigration due to climate change, the province would benefit from improving these areas, and focusing on improved labor markets, frontline services, & social cohesion to reduce any potential cultural or ethnic tensions[4].

- Resettled communities often suffer due to their removal from cultural and material resources that they rely on[4]; the province can prepare to ensure that newcomers have access to these materials.

- Rural and urban areas in Newfoundland and Labrador can both prepare for this immigration impact, primarily by preparing the cities and towns themselves to adapt to climate change. This can include resilient infrastructure and other adaptation measures, which could include mobile infrastructures, seawalls and barriers, and hydroponic agriculture.

- Social cohesion has been shown to be a significant factor in disaster resilience and recovery. The province can create and maintain more accessible gathering places that foster interaction such as libraries, community gardens and parks, and playgrounds[5]. Investments into green and inclusive community buildings and areas can strengthen communities to the benefit of new immigrants, as well as support good jobs and local economic growth, contribute to climate objectives, and otherwise serve disadvantaged communities[9].

Main Factors that
Influence Immigrant Retention:

- employment;
- medical care insurance;
- K-12 education;
- spouse's integration;
- public attitudes[1].

To increase retention rates,
Newfoundland & Labrador can:

- work to build more welcoming communities;
- improve social and community connection activities;
- and increase educational opportunities and settlement services[11].

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