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**Background/Purpose of Research**

Historically, local immigration settlement policy in Canada has been a patchwork quilt of organizations and services. Depending on the place, a variety of sectors would play some type of role in this policy including municipalities, faith-based organizations, ethno-cultural organizations, federally government funded settlement service agencies, employment service agencies, and libraries. However, there would be no type of formalized settlement policy as there was no localized body or council that would ensure all the organizations and sectors involved worked in some type of coordinated fashion or that they were all brought to the same table. Consequently this set-up has hindered collaboration, cooperation, coordination, and in many cases, effective governance between the sectors involved in the settlement and integration process of newcomers. As a result, the system, which ideally, should be providing newcomers an efficient and smooth settlement process, is hindered by structural and systemic issues.

Further complicating matters is the formal and informal nature of each of these sectors. It is much easier for more formalized sectors such as government funded settlement services or employment services to find common ground and work together as it is for the same formalized sectors to work with informal sectors such as an ethno-cultural organizations or faith based organizations. This has proved problematic as the informal sectors and formal sectors can often play complimentary roles in the settlement process.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC, federal department responsible for everything related to Canadian immigration) has identified this problem and is taking steps to address it, primarily with a new policy called Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs). Local Immigration Partnerships were first introduced in Ontario in 2008 as part of the 2005 Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA). In CIC’s words, “LIPs are the mechanism through which CIC
supports the development of community-based partnerships and panning around the needs of newcomers. The partnership council’s main goal is to oversee the development of a local settlement strategy and targeted action plan to produce a more welcoming and inclusive community. The overall objective is to engage groups that will coordinate and enhance the current settlement and integration service delivery network, while avoiding duplication.” LIPs are based on a welcoming communities philosophy, which acknowledges that settlement and integration is a two way process, where is the onus is not simply on newcomers but rather on all parties involved. At a service provider level, this means the settlement and integration process is the responsibility of more than just settlement service agencies and ethno-cultural organizations, it’s a community responsibility including mainstream organizations and institutions.

Previously, CIC’s local settlement policy consisted of funding general programs such as Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC), Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), and the HOST program for particular newcomers (permanent residents and convention refugees) in certain places (decided based on demographic stats) for select periods of time (generally three years). Across Ontario, with great variability, different sectors, institutions and organizations delivered different services depending upon the place. LIPS represent a fundamental re-think of local settlement policy and have increased CIC’s presence and funding foot print at a local level. They are part of CIC’s modernization reforms under the Community Connections strategic objective with a focus on more effective integration of services. LIPS also mark the first time municipalities have been formally involved in any capacity be it mandated or funded in the settlement and integration process of newcomers.

Within this context, the purpose of my research is to examine the evolution and implications of LIPS in the context of Canada’s suburban municipalities where the proportion of
immigrant populations is increasing. More specifically, the research will chart the changing nature of governance as it relates to the development of a recently established LIP and assess the implications for immigrant settlement across sectors and at different scales. Key questions related to the LIPs such as what is their presence locally, what sectors have the LIPs connected and established rapports with, and what value has the LIPs delivered to different organizations involved in the settlement process remain.

To address these questions, the focus of this research will be the relatively recently established Local Diversity and Immigration Partnership Council (LDIPC) in Durham Region, Ontario. The specific research objectives are to:

1) Identify the scope of networks explicit in the immigrant settlement policy of Durham Region and the major issues and challenges in a welcoming communities approach to settlement
2) Describe the development of the LDIPC and its interactions with public, private, community agencies, and organizations in Durham Region at the regional and local levels
3) Assess the implications of the LDIPC from the perspectives of public, private, community agencies and organizations in Durham
4) Evaluate the potential for the LDIPC to inform other regional governance innovations in Canada’s immigration settlement sector.

Research Design and Data Collection

The research will feature a case study of Durham Region, Ontario. As the easternmost suburban region of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), Durham has a steadily growing immigrant population, although its immigration levels are still comparably lower than other GTA regions. Yet, Durham is often included in the GTA conversation about immigration, even though, policy wise, it shares more in common with regions outside the GTA. Because of the localized nature of immigrant settlement, a case study was the most logical research approach.
To establish an all-encompassing perspective on the LDIPC, a mix of primary and secondary data collections will be employed. Primary data collection will mainly consist of interview transcripts and notes from interviews conducted with a broad swath of sectors involved in the settlement and integration process. Secondary collection will comprise an examination of all primary documents corresponding to the LDIPC. Other secondary data collection will include primary documents associated with COIA. In practice, these methods of data collection were followed with one addition. After discovering valuable information on the minutes of one of the local municipalities, it was decided it would be useful to examine the minutes of the nine municipalities and the eight municipal library boards since the advent of the LDIPC to develop an understanding of its political activity and presence.

Within Durham, the methodology I will employ to obtain primary data is interviews. Interviews offer the most effective method for direct access to valuable stakeholders on a particular issue. The goal is to do 50-60 interviews with key informants in the following sectors: nine municipalities, eight libraries, four school boards, five employment service agencies, and 28 ethno-cultural organizations. Each of these sectors is involved in the settlement and integration of newcomers. Prior research in Durham indicates that certain sectors have played a more significant role than others, sometimes to the exclusion of specific sectors. With the advent of Durham’s LIP and the change to a more broad-based settlement policy, it will be worth exploring, which sectors have been integrated into settlement policy. Interviews with an expansive mix of organizations and sectors will help develop a comprehensive picture of the community’s perception of the LDIPC, one of the objectives of the research.

As the research will take a regional approach to immigration, the objective will be to ensure regional representation from each sector. In some sectors, this will be easier than others.
For example, in the municipal, school board, library, and employment service sectors, regional representation should not be an issue. Yet, in the settlement service agency and ethno-cultural sector, organizations and services remain concentrated in southern Durham, where most immigrants settle. In municipalities such as Whitby, there are no ethno-cultural organizations and one settlement service agency. This uneven situation will hinder regional representation but it will also yield interesting questions. For instance, what are the regional implications of certain municipalities having more ethno-cultural organizations, does that mean they play a significant role in the LDIPC? Or more simply, how does a regional body like the LDIPC manage such unevenness in certain sectors?

As for my results, I nearly matched my proposed interview output with 51 interviews. These interviews took place in the following sectors: 13 in municipalities, 12 in ethno-cultural organizations, five in employment service agencies, four in faith based organizations, four in school boards, and three consultants. In terms of number of organizations I interviewed, this translated to: eight municipalities, 12 ethno-cultural organizations, five employment service agencies, four faith based organizations, three school boards, and three consultants. Within the library sector regional representation was achieved, while in the municipal sector regional representation was nearly reached as only one municipality is absent. In the ethno-cultural sector, nearly half of the active organizations were interviewed with geographical representation coming primarily from Oshawa, Ajax, and Pickering. Nearly all employment service agencies were interviewed and three quarters of school boards in Durham. At the beginning of the primary interview stage when interviews started, the researcher learned that the LDIPC had given considerable attention to the faith sector, thus changes in the interview sample were made to ensure faith-based organizations were included. Again, the researcher learned through the first
few interviews who was involved in different capacities with the LDIPC, and as the primary purpose of the research was to examine the impact of the LDIPC, it was deemed appropriate to interview consultants who had involvement with the LDIPC even though they did not belong to an organization involved in immigration settlement or integration.

Preliminary Findings

It should be noted that the following findings are preliminary. The researcher has not yet had the opportunity to thoroughly examine all primary data and formally write up or disseminate findings. These findings have been seen by my thesis supervisor and at this point form the outline of my thesis although not in the format used here. For organizational reasons as well as reasons of simplicity and length, findings will be formatted in a way that corresponds with my objectives. Findings will be communicated under the heading of each objective.

Objective #1:
Identify the scope of networks explicit in the immigrant settlement policy of Durham Region and the major issues and challenges in the welcoming communities approach to settlement.

The LDIPC council has been composed at an executive or senior level with a champion picked from each sector the LDIPC wanted to be represented. Part of the philosophy behind this was to ensure full community buy in to create a welcoming communities approach. According to participants, there are pros and cons to this approach. Pros include senior people putting the issues of diversity and immigration on the agenda and the LDIPC gaining full support from influential organizations and institutions in Durham, whose support is needed if the LDIPC is to meet its mandate. On the other hand, a council of this structure means members of the council will receive benefits that other organizations may not and having only one person from some sectors particularly as it relates to diverse sectors like municipalities or ethno-cultural organizations is problematic.
Besides the organizations who are members of the LDIPC council, in many ways, participation in LDIPC activities is voluntary. The LDIPC has no authority to coerce organizations or institutions into participating in LDIPC led initiatives, instead it must encourage or persuade prospective participants. As a result, the benefits organizations receive become crucial not only to ensure successful initiatives but to maintain long-term participation and ultimately creditability. Predominately, the universal benefit organizations accrued from LDIPC activities was networking. Organizations noted not only meeting other organizations through LDIPC activities but also learning more about organization’s services outside their sector.

This finding is not entirely surprising as what seems to be one of the greatest accomplishments of the LDIPC is its regional community building capacity. In the eyes of participants, never before has a regional exercise with the same level of regional scope and scale as the LDIPC’s consultations and numerous working groups been achieved. The number of organizations and sectors involved in a few of LDIPC’s initiatives both on a sectoral and regional basis is unparalleled. Because of this, many of the silos that previously hindered Durham’s approach to settlement and integration have been broken down. This marks a significant development as Durham has a history of disparate governance relations between sectors and municipalities.

Despite this, three associations within the realm of immigration and settlement and in sectors under the mandate of the LDIPC have formed without the LDIPC’s leadership or participation since its inception. What explains this will require further examination. However, initial evidence suggests part of this may stem from the variable interaction of the LDIPC. The LDIPC has had minimal interaction with ethno-cultural organizations and municipalities. Not surprisingly, one of the associations has emerged out of ethno-cultural sector.
Objective #2:
Describe the development of the LDIPC and its interactions with public, private and community agencies and organizations in Durham at the regional and local levels

The Regional Government of Durham has a history when it pertains to immigration and diversity. The Regional Government has been pressured for over a decade to participate in this policy field yet it has chosen not to. Several factors have pushed the Regional Government to participation in this area in the form of the LDIPC but given its historical absence, the question of whether a council of this nature should be at a regional level remains worth exploring. Despite some disclosure about some of the problems of having the LIP policy at the regional level, overwhelmingly, participants from virtually every sector interviewed, thought the regional level to be the most appropriate level for a number of reasons.

Yet, with this level of support for a regionally based LIP, a key question remains, has the LDIPC operated its activities in a regionally equitable manner? The answer to this seems be no. To be fair, the LDIPC council is regionally representative, however, the LDIPC as it relates to the location of its activities and the organizations that interact with it most tend be mostly located in the southern suburban municipalities of Durham Region. Therefore, the LDIPC seems to be expressing itself more suburbanally than regionally.

Nevertheless, this should not detract from the regional municipal government’s role both in the LDIPC and in Durham Region as a whole. Here, the lesson of municipal involvement should not be lost. The Regional Government has acted as a substantial enabler in increasing settlement capacity and diversity initiatives in Durham Region. It has played a central role in bringing two Welcome Centers to Durham Region and for putting immigration and diversity issues on the public and political agenda. If one examines the state of immigration and settlement pre-municipal involvement and post-municipal involvement, there is a noticeable difference.
There is a huge asterisk that needs to be placed on municipal involvement, federal funding. Because the LDIPC is 100% federally funded, there is a real question as to how much municipal involvement there would be without federal funding especially given the regional government’s lack of participation prior to this funding.

**Objective #3:**
Assess the implications of the LDIPC from the perspectives of public, private, and community organizations in Durham Region

It is important to remember that LDIPC began its mandate in 2008 followed by eighteen months of consultations. As previously stated, the LIP policy represents a fundamental re-think of local settlement policy, in Durham; it was the regional government’s first time entering the immigration and diversity policy area. In part, because of this timeline, many organizations in several sectors do not have a clear understanding of the LDIPC’s mandate. To complicate matters further, communication from the LDIPC to the community seems to be limited and piecemeal. The LDIPC has no central place to document its activities nor are its meeting minutes publicly available. Consequently, few participants felt in the loop, as it related to the LDIPC’s activities.

This reality somewhat explains the under-utilization of the LDIPC’s resources by the community. Although the LDIPC claims to receive continuous and constant requests for its services, organizations interviewed here were requesting very little of the LDIPC. Whether it be resources, knowledge, or expertise, participants could name very few occasions where they had contacted the LDIPC for something specific. Unfortunately, this mindset has left many identified needs unaddressed in numerous sectors, which the LDIPC has the resources to respond to.

**Objective #4:**
Evaluate the potential for the LDIPC to inform other regional governance innovations in Canada’s immigration settlement sector.
As evidenced by the case study of Durham Region, there are certainly some promising elements to the LIP policy. Municipal involvement (which in the case of most LIPs, municipalities are the primary participants or partners) has produced a lot of change. COIA under the guise of the LIP policy gave municipalities, two components that were lacking to address immigration, funding and a mandate, and this has no doubt made a world of difference. However, the key ingredient here is upper level government funding, therefore, making local success dependent on multilevel government cooperation.

Although localization of immigration policy has re-set the terms of the regionalization debate, if the case of Durham Region is used, this local regionalization debate may be taking on similar contours to its provincial and national cousins. How regional this debate at a local level remains unclear as the level of regional engagement on behalf of the LDIPC seems to be minimal. It seems to be regional in label only.

The other important piece to examine when assessing the impact of the LIP policy in Durham Region is the state of Durham’s immigration and settlement approach prior to the implementation of the LDIPC. Would the federal funding and the LIP structure make as big a difference in places like Toronto or Vancouver where a much more advanced approach to immigration and diversity already exists? In other words, has success been much more noticeable in Durham because it had a much lower benchmark to begin with?

In order to partially address this question, my research will use previous reports in Durham that were conducted prior to the advent of the LDIPC to determine the impact of the LDIPC in an evolutionary way. Research will highlight how the LDIPC has addressed many of
the issues raised in previous research within Durham and also discuss the issues that continue to be neglected.