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Social and Economic Realities and Reversals: Lessons Learned from Nova Scotia's Provincial Nominees

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Social and Economic Realities and Reversals: Lessons Learned from Nova Scotia's Provincial Nominees

Alexandra Dobrowolsky, Catherine Bryan, Pauline Gardiner-Barber

Abstract:

This paper provides an overview of the "economic" category of the Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP), a well-intentioned Nova Scotia immigration initiative that ultimately fell short of expectations for most concerned. The research described in this paper was completed for a pilot study undertaken in 2008. Data included analysis of media reports, relevant policy documents, and 18 qualitative interviews with immigrants who entered Nova Scotia as provincial nominees between 2008 and 2009. In exploring the "lessons learned", we identify an imbalance between social and economic wants and needs, along with an appreciable "disconnect" between the priorities of provincial immigration agendas and those of the newcomers in question. Hence we argue that even for a strategically select group of immigrants, the immigration process can become fraught with difficulties and disappointing outcomes. In arriving at our recommendations, we draw upon theories of transnationalism, remittances, and gender and migration.

Keywords: Provincial Nominee Programs, Nova Scotia Nominee Program, Economic Migrants, Transnationalism, Gender and Migration, Remittances

This paper provides a snapshot of a Nova Scotia immigration initiative that was well intentioned but ultimately fell short of expectations for most concerned: the "economic" category of the Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP). This snapshot serves as a study of how and why an attempt to create a "home away from home" for even a strategically select group of immigrants can become fraught with difficulties and result in disappointing outcomes. It suggests that part of the problem lies in what we (as researchers and students of immigration) perceive to be an imbalance between social and economic wants and needs, along with an appreciable "disconnect" between the priorities of provincial immigration officials and those of the newcomers in question.

The pages that follow not only tell the story of the failed "economic" stream of the NSNP but also analyze the repercussions for theory and the immigrants involved. The main reason for studying what is now an obsolete provincial immigration category is neither to revel in the scandals it spurred nor to sensationalize the multiple challenges it inadvertently created for officials and migrants alike. Rather, by exploring and evaluating the different sets of theoretical and practical implications of this economic stream and its consequences, this study hopes to contribute to a greater understanding of the promises and pitfalls of present-day immigration efforts and to help inform more grounded, well-rounded immigration policies in future.

In short, many lessons can be learned from this Nova Scotian experiment gone wrong, the most crucial, in our view, despite being quite straightforward, were still overlooked in this unfortunate situation. They are that new provincial immigration strategies must work harder at achieving greater equilibrium between economic and social priorities and must find an appropriate balance between the choices, calculations and commitments of state officials and those of newcomers.

Our analysis stems from research completed for a pilot study funded by the Atlantic Metropolis Centre (AMC) in 2008. The project comprised a review of relevant government documents, a content analysis of local media reports on the NSNP (gathered from the *Newscan* data base), and 18 qualitative interviews with immigrants who entered Nova Scotia between 2008 and 2009, most as economic nominees (16) but also as skilled workers (2).

The paper proceeds as follows. Part I begins by briefly explaining the nature and objectives of provincial nominee programs in general and then moves to the NSNP and the specifics of the "economic" stream on which our research was based. Part II reviews some key presumptions that underpin nominee programs, and then Part III illustrates how the experiences of Nova Scotia economic nominees run counter to these ideas and ideals. We highlight, in particular, the social dimensions that are often underdeveloped, especially in immigration categories expressly aimed at increasing economic benefits. More specifically, we focus on care concerns and the significance of social networks to emphasize that these aspects of immigration need to be foremost in the development of immigration strategies even when primary objectives revolve around economic returns. This informs our policy recommendations noted in the concluding section of the paper.

PART I: Provincial Nominee Programs (PNPs) and the Nova Scotia Nominee Program: Divergent Expectations and Outcomes

Provincial nominee programs are relatively new in Canada. Historically, even though immigration is a jurisdiction shared by both federal and provincial governments, the federal government tended to be the primary player when dealing with immigration matters (Quebec being the main exception). However,

since the mid 1990s, federal officials have begun signing successive immigration agreements with a growing number of provinces. The focus here is on PNPs, which allow provincial authorities to "nominate" immigrants to the federal government's Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) department. While CIC approval 'seals the final deal,' each province's program is fashioned to respond to its particular immigration needs.

The expectation is that provinces and territories will open new avenues of immigration tailored to their particular contexts and demands, which typically correspond to their respective labour market needs, and that CIC will ultimately endorse their immigrant selections. This gives provinces more control in terms of immigration program design, implementation and, optimally, successful outcomes relative to their particular immigration needs.

The hope is that nominee programs also can prove to be advantageous for certain kinds of migrants, particularly those with the requisite capital and skills. The expectation here is that they now have greater "choice" in the types of immigration programs offered at both federal and provincial levels and in terms of the variations in nominee programs across the country. At the same time, with PNPs especially, given their speedier processing times, select migrants are able to "fast-track" the immigration system and, in the end, citizenship processes.

With such considerations in mind, the first Canada-Nova Scotia nominee agreement was signed in August, 2002, as a five-year pilot with the goal of introducing one thousand immigrants. It included several designated streams that were then expanded over time to include a few additional categories. However, this chapter focuses on the "economic" category. This designation not only underscored the federal government's economic priorities as determined by CIC but also reflected the Nova Scotia government's attempt at innovation. By July, 2006, however, as a result of numerous difficulties (detailed below), Nova Scotia stopped accepting economic applicants. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that the NSNP as a whole continues to operate. In fact, in September 2007, a second NSNP agreement was signed with the federal government with no expiration date and no limits on the number of certificates that could be issued.

The economic stream initially held promise in light of the particular challenges faced by the province. As discussed in this volume, Nova Scotia grapples with interrelated demographic and economic concerns that include historic and present outmigration; recurring difficulties with attraction and retention; an aging population; chronic de-population in rural areas; slow economic growth; and labour shortages in various sectors. In this context, we can understand why the economic stream of the NSNP would be viewed as an opportune strategy aimed at remedying serious provincial demographic and economic shortfalls.

In time, the following objectives for the economic category became evident: (a) to increase the economic benefits for Nova Scotia; (b) to process and admit candidates as expeditiously as possible; (c) to attract and retain more immigrants; and (d) to provide mentorship to give immigrants exposure to and experience with Nova Scotia businesses.

To be sure, potential economic stream migrants also had to meet certain eligibility criteria based on the following: candidates had to be between 20 and 60 years old, have completed grade 12 or its equivalent, and have basic English or French language skills. They also had to have experience owning and operating a business and have documented proof of a minimum net worth of $300,000.

In addition, applicants were required to pay a fee of $130,500, broken down as follows: $100,000 went to a Nova Scotia company offering a paid work placement and "mentorship" (to be paid in two instalments of $50,000, with at least $20,000 of this amount to be paid in salary to the nominee); $20,000 went to an international recruiter or immigration consultant in the nominee's home country (only $18,000 was paid to the consultant early in the program) (OAG, 2008a: 6); $10,000 was to go to Cornwallis Financial Corporation, a Halifax-based financial consulting company, to oversee the process and prepare immigrant files; and $500 went to the province of Nova Scotia for an assessment fee (although the province dropped this portion of the fee on May 9, 2006). After provincial staff approved a nominee's application, it went to CIC for final approval.

Clearly, these were select migrants who were strategically recruited. Economic stream principal applicants were wealthy individuals with business skills. Because of the financial and business requirements, they were also more likely to be male than female. In fact, statistics provided by the Office of Immigration indicate that this was the case for provincial nominees overall. For example, by 2007, 16% of the total immigrants to Nova Scotia were male principal applicants to the NSNP; women constituted less than half that number at 7% (data on file with the author compiled by the Office of Immigration (OOI) in April 2009). Office of Immigration data also indicate that between 2004 and 2006, the top source countries for provincial nominees were Korea (219), Iran (185), Taiwan (178), and the Philippines (103), followed by Britain (101) and the United States (71) (*see* Office of Immigration 2007).

The economic stream plan entailed having successful candidates land in Nova Scotia and be matched with a business. Through their work with these business "mentors," nominees would gain the local experience and contacts that would serve them well when the nominees moved on to build and grow their own business ventures.

Economic stream nominees were then required to participate in a six-month middle management employment contract chosen from a list of companies provided by the province. Again, program participants would receive $20,000 for the period but, if they did not sign a contract with a business mentor within one year of landing, would forfeit $100,000 of their application fees (Office of the Auditor General 2008a: 6).

Unfortunately, many of these expectations were not met. Various aspects of the economic stream proved problematic, starting with the very high application fees, and in the end, there was little to show for the expenses incurred. For instance, many nominees were poorly matched with companies. Highly skilled professionals were assigned to inappropriate postings that included, in some cases, menial labour and, in others, involved non-existent work assignments. As a result, not everyone who started a mentorship completed the required six-month assignment.

A two-volume report released by Nova Scotia's Office of the Auditor General (OAG 2008a; 2008b) uncovered the depth of the economic stream's problems. For example, the auditor general found that many companies offering mentorships did not comply with the stated criteria: some were smaller than required, while others provided placements clearly not at middle management level.

Early evaluations of the program were not positive. Government-released data showed provincial targets not being reached, while other indicators, for example, those that would track how the program fared when it came to retention of migrants, were not forthcoming.

Controversies also arose with respect to the private consulting company, Cornwallis Financial Corporation, entrusted with running most of the logistics of the program. While this was meant to be a "public private partnership," the bulk of the administration fell to the private company. Early in the process, newspaper reports flagged that the contract had been untendered and that Cornwallis was among the top donors to the provincial Progressive Conservatives, the party in government at the time (Flinn, 2005: 6). Increasingly, the high fees Cornwallis received were also called into question, and Halifax Global Inc. was hired (this time, in a tendered competition) to review the money involved ("Immigrant fees reviewed" 2006: 5). This, in turn, raised more questions in the press over the high fees going to Cornwallis (Flinn, 2005:4; Jackson, 2005: B1)

On the government side, initial oversight of the program came from the Office of Economic Development, but when Nova Scotia's Office of Immigration (OOI) was created, it took over responsibility for the "public" part of the nominee program "partnership". Still, the OOI was markedly constrained in its capacities, given its small staff and limited budget, and given Cornwallis' role, the program appeared to have operated on a more privatized basis.

To make matters worse, when Cornwallis' contract expired and was not renewed, it launched four legal suits against the provincial government, claims that were consolidated into one by April 2008 (Nova Scotia, 2009). A year later, the corporation and the government of Nova Scotia reached an out-of-court settlement (Jackson, 2009) involving millions of dollars that drew on nominees' fees.[1]

Taken together, these challenges help to explain why Nova Scotia stopped accepting new NSNP economic category applications on July 1, 2006. However, it did continue processing applications received before that date and proceeded with mentor programs for economic nominees who had received permanent resident visas for Nova Scotia, some of whom arrived in the province as late as 2008

Additionally, and in response to well-organized mobilization on the part of nominees, in 2007 the provincial government found itself making a commitment to refund millions of dollars. By October 2007, local newspapers reported that the OOI had

> posted a notice on its website that those who hadn't started the program and can prove that they have lived in Nova Scotia for 12 consecutive months each could be in line for the refund. Those who had started or completed the program do not qualify (Jeffrey, 2007: B1).

Six hundred people who had not yet signed a contract became eligible for a $100,000 refund. In the fall of 2008, the Nova Scotia government announced more refunds would be forthcoming, with 206 people added to the list of those eligible.

1

Immigration Minister Len Goucher announced that the lawsuit against the province, and the province's counterclaim, had been settled "with the province getting at least $7.5 million and Cornwallis $1 million. All of the money will come from the fees paid by immigrants or from interest earned on those fees, not from taxpayers Mr. Goucher said…Cornwallis president Stephen Lockyer didn't want to say much…about the settlement…The RCMP are still looking at aspects of the immigrant nominee program" (Jackson 2009). *See* also (Nova Scotia 2009).

In the end, we can safely conclude that many aims and expectations of the NSNP's economic category failed to be realized. However, before exploring the actual assessments of some of the nominees involved, and why there was a "disconnect" between their expectations and priorities and those of the Nova Scotia government, let us turn to, and consider, the broader logic at work in such programs.

PART II: Broader Theories and Expectations

Provincial Nominee Programs represent an effort at the sub-national level to attract highly skilled and self-sufficient immigrants. They work from the assumption that migration is inevitable based on the individual choices of migrants and the features of the receiving state that make migration desirable. These features, or pull factors, are often framed in terms of economic opportunities: employment and investment. PNPs seek to take advantage of this process by recruiting the most economically viable migrants: those with high levels of financial and human capital. In the case of the NSNP economic category, this was most obvious in the $130, 500 fee but was also evident in the professional credential requirements.

Under the NSNP economic stream, "ideal migrants" (*see* Barber, 2008a) were those who could afford the fee and sought to improve their economic standing through migration. The province, in turn, sought to capitalize on these individuals and their spending power, investment in local business, and overall contribution to the economy. In these ways, the NSNP economic stream mirrored national and global trends that increasingly cast immigration in economic terms. While it is true that provincial nominees arrive with a set of economic objectives (typically related to employment), by focusing solely on the economic incentives of migration, PNP logic masks the actual expectations of migrants and their families. Two bodies of research are useful for understanding the expectations of the nominees interviewed: the first concerns remittances; the second, gender and migration.

Remittances and Migration

Remittances are usually defined as the money migrant workers send home to their families (Kunz, 2008). The relationship between migration and remittance-sending tends to be understood in terms of balance and reciprocity (De Haas, 2005): people flow in one, or many, directions but always to the same type of capital-rich destinations, and capital, through the remittance process, flows back to the presumably capital-poor country of origin. This anticipated and accepted cycle is viewed as economically beneficial for both the receiving (country of employment or resettlement) and sending (country of origin) countries. By spending a portion of their income in the receiving state, migrants contribute to local and national economies. The remittances they send to their families abroad have a similar function, as people use this money to buy consumer goods, start small businesses, and access services. Remittances, then, while initially received by one family, generate income and revenue for entire communities. Based on these expectations, migration is increasingly being heralded as a development strategy that contributes simultaneously to the economic prosperity of the sending and receiving states (*see* UNDP, 2009).

Such an account of migration and remittances, however, obscures long-standing inequalities between countries and oversimplifies the relationships between those who send remittances and those who receive them. As Kunz (2008) argues,

> this [understanding] of remittances is problematic because it evades delving into the complex and varied human, social, political and economic realities within which remittances are embedded, and which are an integral part of the phenomenon and make them possible in the first place. (Kunz, 2008: 1398)

Furthermore, the account overlooks the negative consequences of remittances and the contradictory ways in which their distribution affects families and communities. Rather than evenly filtering through an economy, remittances may heighten local social class divisions and conflicts. They may also become concentrated in urban centres, effectively increasing gaps between wages in cities and those in rural areas (Binford, 2003).

In addition to these oversights, mainstream or economic accounts of remittances often assume ideal circumstances in both the country of origin and that of resettlement or employment (Binford, 2003). In the country of origin, the development potential of remittances depends on investment and consumption opportunities. Where these do not exist or are limited for various complex reasons, the value of remittances remains confined within individual families. In the country of resettlement, migrant labour is only economically beneficial when the structural position of migrants relative to labour market opportunities enables them to generate remittances. If migrants remain unemployed, underemployed, or employed in low-paid positions, their income and, as such, remittance-generating capacities are limited. As Barber (2008b) showed in the case of Filipinos who migrate to global labour markets, the lower wage rates typically paid to migrant workers seeking work abroad are compounded by migrants' indebtedness at home. Migration is a relatively costly process for all categories of migrants, most of all for those who must demonstrate wealth before departure but especially for relatively low-skilled workers who must pay for various documents to be processed and often for recruiter fees, if not travel costs. Skilled workers, such as those entering Canada, must also prove they have sufficient funds to survive for a three-month period while they resettle and locate employment. Nonetheless, even when they are paid at the bottom of local wage scales in the countries to which they migrate, most migrants still hope to pay down debts incurred through the migration process, as well as to send financial support to relatives remaining behind. All of this counts as remittances but sometimes mistakenly.

Women are now migrating as independent global migrants in their own right, a process described as the feminization of migration. As global migrants, their remittance patterns differ from those of men, who are more inclined to reserve some funds for their personal use. Given the devaluing of the work contributions, education, and skills of most labour migrants, both women and men, it is truly remarkable that remittances are possible at all. Persistent inequalities between countries characterized as migrant sending and/or receiving suggest that deep cleavages pervade global migration flows, which are stratified by racialization, class difference, and gender (Piper, 2008). Nina Glick Schiller (2010) suggests inequalities in global power shape the downward social class mobility of migrants. It would seem, then, that some proponents of migration remittances as a form of development overlook the realities of migrant experiences, suggesting otherwise. Our research shows how various obstacles and policy blind spots can interfere with migrants' forward financial planning; therefore, even economically privileged migrants are at risk of downward social mobility. David Ley's (2010) work on "millionaire migrants" in Vancouver explores this theme, outlining how gendered cultural and class expectations can affect immigrant settlement and the decision to remain in Canada.

Gender and Migration

As we have seen, much like the issue of remittances, gender is an important consideration for migration scholars. Although early research on international migration tended to overlook gender, over the last 30 years, a vast body of work has emerged that documents and analyzes the relationship between gender and migration (Dobrowolsky & Tastsoglou, 2006). This scholarship recognizes that gender, understood as the sociocultural meanings and values assigned to biological difference, informs migration opportunities and experiences. Moreover, it emphasizes the gendered outcomes of migration, that is, how migration influences and alters gender relations and hierarchies.

Early accounts of gender and migration often view migration as an emancipatory experience that empowers women by providing enhanced employment opportunities (*see* Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991; Lamphere, 1987; Pessar, 2003). Through their earnings, employed migrant women can assert increased independence or authority in the country of resettlement. As Guendelman and Perez-Itriago argue in their 1987 study of Mexican migrants to the United States, migrant women's employment requires a renegotiation of the gendered division of labour between heterosexual spouses:

> Joint decisions and activities [concerning child care, budgeting and consumption] bridge the traditional gender distance between the spouses and serve to balance power relationships within the family. Such cooperation also seem[s] to enhance women's feelings of autonomy, as they became aware that they [are] independently contributing to all aspects of the family's welfare, and not limited to childrearing, childbearing and household management. (Guendelman & Perez-Itriago, 1987: 266).

This shift towards a more equal division of labour has consequences both for individual migrant women and their families and social networks abroad. Here, it is anticipated that migrant women exposed to egalitarian gender norms will transmit the ideas and behaviours of gender equality to family and friends in the country of origin. Underscoring the non-economic or social consequences of migration, this process been labelled “social remittances” (Levitt, 1998).

Other studies, however, have highlighted the extent to which the emancipatory potential of migration remains largely unachieved. These studies often focus on circular labour migration and emphasize the extent to which women often migrate for employment that is itself constrained by traditional gender roles (Andersen, 2000; Parreñas, 2000; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005). As a result, they work as caregivers, nannies, housekeepers and entertainers, positions that reinforce rather than destabilize gender hierarchy or the traditional division of labour.

Yet a third subsection of this literature focuses on the ways gender-- understood here as a process -- is negotiated and renegotiated in different contexts. The emphasis on gender as a process means that gender norms are simultaneously upheld, challenged, rejected, and even harnessed in different settings to meet different objectives (Barber, 2008b; Tastsoglou & Dobrowolsky, 2006; Fouron & Glick Schiller, 2001; Pessar & Mahler, 2003). Take, for example, domestic labour migration. While a migrant woman's paid employment may challenge traditional gender roles within her household or community, the nature of her employment reinforces these roles. In this way, as Hondagneu-Sotelo (1992) poignantly argues, “the process of [migration] diminishes patriarchy, but it does not do so uniformly” (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992: 394).

Despite numerous studies demonstrating that women's migration experiences are often constrained by gender inequality in the receiving society and that gender norms are often simultaneously contested and confirmed through migration, the migration as an emancipation model continues to serve as a

framework for mainstream development strategies (*see* UNDP, 2009). Likewise, despite a growing body of work challenging the logic of remittances, they frequently are viewed as inherently beneficial for the states, families, and individuals involved. Premised on neutrality and reciprocity, this model assumes available employment in the country of resettlement and investment and consumption opportunities in the country of origin.

In addition to influencing policy and development initiatives, mainstream accounts of remittances, gender and migration can inform migrant decision-making, which certainly was the case with the nominees interviewed. However, while most nominees' expectations corresponded to the established understanding of migration and remittances, their actual experiences in Nova Scotia deviate from it. Similarly, the hoped for gendered outcomes of migration were unevenly attained by nominees. Much of this can be attributed to unemployment and nominees' unforeseen reliance on "modified survival and care strategies." It is to these unmet expectations, and the strategies employed by nominees to redress their outcomes, that we now turn.

PART III: The Specifics: Mismatched Expectations

Despite the NSNP's emphasis on economic motivations and objectives, for the nominees interviewed, financial gain was not their primary reason for migrating. Instead, nominees cited their children's well-being as their principal motivation. Nominees typically self-identified as "liberal," and, in many cases, saw their values as discordant with the ideologies and practices of their states of origin. Many expressed anxiety concerning the authorities in their countries of origin, describing the political situation as unstable and dangerous. One family moved to Canada to avoid mandatory military service for their sons; others left because they felt their children's mobility was curtailed by moral and legal codes. These feelings were particularly prevalent among nominees with daughters. For example, one Iranian nominee said, "I prefer to send my daughter to a different kind of country, a more free country, [where there is] more chance to have a better life." This "better life" was often understood in terms of increased opportunities, yet the focus was rarely economic in nature. Rather, they tended to be social opportunities related to traveling unrestricted, meeting new people, interacting with different cultures, appreciating how different people live, accessing education, and developing new language skills.

For many nominees, migration was also specifically intended to augment the opportunities available to female children and, in some instances, to female partner/parents. Concerning his spouse, one nominee said "my wife is a pediatrician. She is very interested in continuing to study. She is very sharp, and she can grow here." For these nominees, then, the decision to migrate to Nova Scotia was based on their understandings and expectations of gender equality in Canada. Much like conventional accounts of gender and migration, they anticipated that in Canada, their female family members would achieve more socially, economically, and personally.

Gender also emerges as an important aspect of migration in relation to household responsibilities and the sexual division of labour. Several nominees hoped that migration would provide them the opportunity to renegotiate household responsibilities and tasks, with men and women and male and female children alike engaging in various household chores. These particular nominees believed that a more flexible sexual division of labour would benefit both male and female children. In these ways, for most nominees, the decision to migrate was part of a parenting strategy, a way of providing and caring for their children, rather than a purely economic one.

The decision to migrate, however, was made at the expense of other caring relationships, notably those involving aging parents. The presence of aging parents in the country of origin was described as one of the more stressful and uncertain aspects of migration. Typically, the nominees planned to redress the care deficit created in their absence by providing financial support and by returning to the country of origin regularly to provide respite for other family members (typically siblings).

In these ways, for many nominees, family migration was part of a larger strategy of parenting and caring for children. Concurrently, it was intended to redress gender inequalities in terms of both access to opportunities for female children and spouses and the division of household labour. Further, it was also expected in several cases that the nominee -- frequently the most affluent member of his or her family -- would continue to financially support siblings and extended family. Again, this was to be achieved through remittances. While some nominees could achieve these goals without employment, their savings enabling them to retire once in Nova Scotia, most could not. Unable either to access the mentorship program or find employment, most nominees were forced to modify their objectives and formulate new strategies. These resulted in a reversal not only of what the nominees expected but also of what mainstream accounts of migration anticipate.

Indeed, most nominees experienced a significant decline in their standard of living in Canada, something not unexpected, at least for the short term. Less predictable were the reported feelings of class humiliation, compounded by gendered cultural norms. For example, a businessman from a Middle Eastern country, who described his previous circumstances as upper middle class, told us about the features of what we identify as significant downward social mobility. In his country of origin, he owned several properties, hired a driver for his car, and had a private English language teacher for his young son. While he anticipated a different lifestyle in Canada, he had not imagined just how different and challenging it would be. Because his placement with a suitable local firm did not materialize, he had to contemplate other options. One idea was to drive a taxi, but he felt that he must maintain class appearances to provide stability for his young son; the idea of his father as a driver not the driver's employer was considered potentially traumatic for his transposed son. Perhaps it would also be traumatic to a father wishing to provide a continuity of class status in his son's childhood.

While many of Canada's immigrants, historically and in the present, have experienced downward social mobility, at least temporarily, most were not lured here by a privately profitable immigration scheme managed by a consulting firm and with the promise of business opportunities in Canada. Nonetheless, this immigrant told us, without bitterness,

> …my son is a little child. He doesn't understand what happened to me and why the lifestyle is very different. I tried to do it in a way that he cannot recognize any difference between here and there. I arranged some programmes, I bought a new car, and sometimes we go to good restaurants and…when the weather is good, we go somewhere around the country and make some pleasure for him.

The concern with class in this example illustrates how the calculations made by nominees are carefully measured. However, the subjective and more demeaning aspects of the transnational class switch are incalculable. Our research also suggests that with policy modification, they may also be somewhat mitigated, that is, if we continue to believe that market-driven immigration policies are productive for immigrant attraction and retention.

The strategies developed by the nominees to mitigate the limitations of the NSNP and their subsequent unemployment span great distances and rely on familial, social, and business networks in the country of origin. Unable to access the hoped-for benefits of the NSNP mentorship program or find appropriate employment, most nominees -- at the time of the interviews -- found themselves in difficult circumstances. Most were drawing heavily on savings, and some were beginning to seek out work and new investment opportunities in the country of origin. Continued employment in the country of origin was effective where one family income earner had been able to maintain employment there. Although many female partner/parents were employed before resettlement, it was typically the male partner/parent who continued to work in the country of origin, commuting to and from Nova Scotia. Under this arrangement, women became fully responsible for the daily tasks of social reproduction and household management.

The strategy is itself gendered, drawing on divisions of reproductive and productive labour in the country of origin. More importantly, however, the outcome is also highly gendered, compromising the awaited social outcomes of migration and the increased mobility for female family members and, in a very real sense, diminishing the relative autonomy women had experienced through paid employment in the country of origin. Furthermore, efforts to establish a more equitable division of household labour were curtailed; separated from their children, nominee men were unable to engage in family and domestic life in Canada as they had hoped.

Through this, we can observe an explicit reversal of the expected flow of remittances as both migrant and money move in the same direction: away from the country of origin and into Canada. This was exacerbated in situations where employment was unavailable in both Canada and the country of origin, and as a result, nominees came to require remittances sent from family -- parents and siblings -- in the country of origin.

The experiences of the nominees complicate conventional accounts of labour migration and the hoped-for outcomes of fast-track business-class and investor streams, with many nominees who were unable to secure employment choosing instead to leave Nova Scotia for larger city centres such as Toronto and Vancouver. Their experiences also bring to light the limitations of immigration policies that are solely interested in the economic contributions of immigrants.

Because of this group of nominees' economic status, the NSNP failed to anticipate that they would face challenges similar to those of other newcomers. At the same time, what is clear through the narratives of the nominees is that while different groups of migrants may face similar difficulties, their socioeconomic standing in the country of origin influences how those difficulties are experienced and resolved. For this group of nominees, the stress already associated with migration was compounded by a lack of financial security, loss of status, prolonged separation from family or the unexpected need to rely on family, the consequences of which, as described by participants, included uncertainty, stress, anxiety, emotional distress, and tension between spouses. Furthermore, for both men and women, normative gender roles were reassigned by the circumstances of resettlement. In other words, gender inequality as experienced in the country of origin was not rectified; rather, it was reinforced.

Part IV: Conclusions and Recommendations

Our research indicates the need to deal with the "disconnect" occurring in immigrants' lives. This entails a more concerted effort to balance social and cultural aspects of migrants' lives – pre- and post-immigration -- with the government's economic priorities reflected in immigration policy. In particular,

we suggest more attention be accorded to gender, class, and cultural conditions and associated experiences in an effort to recruit immigrants across various social and economic backgrounds. Acknowledgment of immigrants' social standing and expertise should be reflected in policy development around the provision of support programs. Immigrant support groups already know these things; what they lack are adequate resources and support for the cross-cultural translation of their clients' needs. Neoliberal policy takes for granted that class and money are commensurate with self-sufficiency, hence, the underlying logic of the economically calculated immigration selection processes that suggest better off economic migrants do not require settlement resources. Clearly they do and ones better tailored to their needs.

Further, in recruitment practices for various skilled workers into particular occupational niches, for example in nominee programs, ethical best practices suggest working with professional associations and educational and other institutional partners in countries of origin to ensure that (a) potentially negative outcomes caused by migration -- disruption to family life, depletion of human capital in the community of origin, downward class mobility in Nova Scotia, and unfulfilled expectations around livelihood [for example, in the case of medical or other skilled professionals] and family relations -- are minimized, and (b) Canada's reputation as a welcoming destination is deserved.

Otherwise, it would appear that our immigration policy represents a full commitment to a neoliberal market-driven model with little regard for immigrant dignity and, in PNPs, immigrant retention. Ultimately, in the intensified competition among western nations for "ideal" immigrants, Canada's reputation may slide. After all, immigrants who enter Canada are much better informed about immigration policy than in the past, and we can assume they are also making ever more calculated decisions of their own. Let us better respectfully recognize them and their contributions to the social and economic fabric of the communities enhanced by their emigration.

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