

Canada has always had strong ties to the rest of the world through the movement of people. It is a land of immigrants: more than 18% of its 32 million residents were born outside the country. In recent years, Canadians have become more internationally mobile as new forces, such as globalization, modern transportation and communications impact on traditional work and living patterns. As a result, an increasing number of Canadians now live and work abroad. This paper estimates that some 2.7 million Canadian citizens are scattered around the world. Should these Canadians, locally-born or foreign-born, living and

working abroad be considered as part of the Canadian population – in effect a Canadian diaspora? What are the possible impacts of this group of citizens on Canada’s international relations, economically, politically and culturally? What policy areas does Canada need to develop to recognize this diaspora, in addition to conventional policies toward transnational movements of people, to maintain and enhance the country’s international ties, and to maximize the benefits of these ties to Canada? All these questions suggest Canada should develop an explicit policy approach to its diaspora.

Recognizing the Canadian Diaspora

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Traditionally, there have always been large numbers of Canadians living outside the country for extended periods, especially in the United States. There are also many Canadian expatriates working for multinational companies and international organizations around the world. More recently, there is evidence that many immigrants to Canada are returning to their countries of origin to pursue business and professional activities, especially in Greater China (the

People’s Republic, Hong Kong and Taiwan). For example, it is estimated that there are upwards of 200,000 Canadians living in Hong Kong, most of whom emigrated from the territory to Canada within the last 20 years, and chose to return to Hong Kong for professional and other reasons. The growing body of Canadians living overseas gives rise to the notion that there may be a “Canadian Diaspora” — in the sense of a community that maintains substantive linkages with Canada.

Before we can answer definitely whether Canada has a diaspora, it is necessary to estimate the size of this group of citizens. Unfortunately, Canada does not have a statistical

**Canadian statistics
are quite limited**

system in place to record accurately the number of Canadians living overseas. Foreign Affairs Canada offers a registration service, either online (<http://www.voyage.gc.ca/main/sos/rocapage-en.asp>) or by mail, for Canadians residing in a foreign country for three months or longer. This service is provided in the event there is a need to contact Canadians to offer urgent advice during a natural disaster or civil unrest, or to inform them of a family emergency at home. Registration is voluntary, and there were only 4,604 individuals or families who registered in 2005, covering in total 9,818 Canadians. Thus, information collected through this service is an unsatisfactory source for estimating the Canadian diaspora. Statistics Canada has put great effort into improving the system of capturing data on emigration. Prior to 1971, emigration figures were “residual” estimates based on three components of population growth — births, deaths and immigration — as well as on errors in the census counts. However, since 1971, an independent estimate of emigration has been produced and since 1991, emigration has included long-term and net temporary emigrants. However, even this improved measure of emigration flow does not shed much light on the stock of Canadians living overseas.

**OECD figures offer
more solid data**

In July 2003 the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) launched a data collection exercise in collaboration with national statistical offices of OECD members to obtain statistics on their foreign-born population, by country of birth and educational attainment. The data were obtained in most cases from censuses taken around 2000. The database makes it possible to provide, for the first time, a comprehensive picture of the foreign-born population for most OECD countries in recent decades. According to this data, there were 1.17 million Canadian expatriates residing in other OECD member countries in 2001, equal to 4% of the total census population in Canada (OECD, 2005). Nevertheless, this number only includes the Canada-born population residing in OECD member countries. Canada has a large number of naturalized foreign-born citizens, as well as some residing in non-OECD countries, notably China and especially Hong Kong.

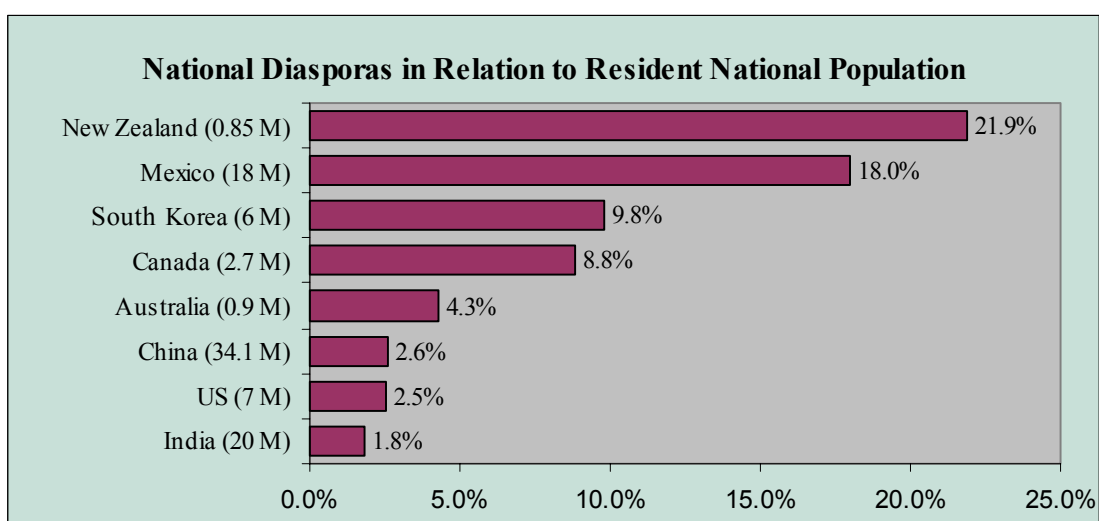
**Canadian diaspora
estimated at 2.7 M**

So neither data source provides a satisfactory answer to the question. This report attempts to use Statistics Canada’s emigration data to produce an estimate of the Canadian diaspora, both Canadian-born and foreign-born, living outside the country. It starts with emigration figures from various Canadian Censuses. Given the Canadian life expectancy at birth was around 65 in 1940-42, we consider a period of 60 years as the relevant span of estimation, e.g., from 1941-2001. Assuming the same death rate applied to emigrants as to Canadian residents, we can get a rough estimate of the Canadian diaspora after adjusting for deaths among emigrants, as shown in Table 1. Based on this, we can estimate there were more than 2.7 million Canadians scattered around the world outside Canada as of the end of 2001. This is equivalent to 8.8% of the 2001 resident population in Canada. Comparing this with other countries’ overseas populations, the estimated number of Canadians overseas is 1.5 times more than the number of Australians and New Zealanders combined; less than half the number of overseas Koreans; one-third the number of overseas Americans; one-seventh the number of overseas Indians and one-twelfth the number of overseas Chinese. However, the Canadian diaspora’s size relative to the resident national population is much higher than for India, the US, China and Australia, but lower than for New Zealand, Mexico and South Korea.

Table 1: Estimate of Canadian Diaspora (1941-2001 Censuses)¹

Period	Census population at the end of period (1,000)	Emigration (1,000)	Annual Average Death Rate (per thousand)	Estimated diaspora group as of the end of 2001* (1,000)
1941-1951	13,648	379	9.58	235
1951-1956	16,081	185	8.54	127
1956-1961	18,238	278	8.02	199
1961-1966	20,015	280	7.68	209
1966-1971	21,568	427	7.40	332
1971-1976	23,450	358	7.22	289
1976-1981	24,820	278	6.95	233
1981-1986	26,101	278	6.92	241
1986-1991	28,031	213	6.94	191
1991-1996	29,611	338	7.07	314
1996-2001	31,021	376	7.16	362
Total		3,390		2,733

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population; *: author's calculation.



Sources:

A: Hugo, et al: 2003:21;

B: The World Confederation of Institutes and Libraries for Chinese Overseas Studies, database;

C: Vertovec, 2005:4

D: Bergsten and Choi, 2003.

E: Author's estimate.

F: High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora, 2001

Where are Canada's overseas citizens?

Traditionally, most people leaving Canada went to the United States and applied for permanent status in that country. However, under the provisions of the North American Free Trade Agreement, there may now be more Canadian workers remaining in the US for an extended period of time without converting to permanent resident status (DeVoretz and Coulombe: 2005). In addition, recently there has been a noticeable shift in Canadian emigration to Asia as a destination. The Reverse Record Check², one of the methods used by Statistics Canada to estimate Canadian emigrants, reveals that between the 1986-1991 and 1991-1996 periods, the share of emigrants to the US remained constant, at half of all permanent emigrants and a third of all temporary emigrants. Over the same period, there was a noticeable shift from Europe to Asia as the destination of emigration. Among

permanent emigrants, the Asian share increased from 9% to 19% while the European share dropped from 32% to 19%. Among temporary emigrants, the Asian share increased from 20% to 31% and the European share dropped from 26% to 17% (see Zhao et al: 2000, for details).

**Some 644,000
Canadians in Asia**

This distribution of emigrants leaving Canada allows us to make a rough estimate of the size of the Canadian diaspora in different regions around the world as of 2001. Among the 2.7 million Canadian diaspora, 1.7 million are living overseas on a permanent basis, and the remainder on a temporary basis. The majority are in the US —1.2 million either permanently or temporarily (the 2000 US Census found 820,000 Canadian-born living in the US). Over 644,000 Canadians live in Asia: Hong Kong alone accounts for over 200,000.

Table 2: Distribution of Canadian Diaspora as of 2001

	Total (100%)		Permanent (62%)		Temporary (38%)	
	Distribution (%)*	Estimated number (1,000)*	Distribution 1991-96 (%)	Estimated number (1,000)*	Distribution 1991-96 (%)	Estimated number (1,000)*
US	44	1,210	50	847	35	363
Asia	24	644	19	322	31	322
Europe	18	499	19	322	17	177
Rest	14	380	12	203	17	177
Total	100	2,733	100	1,694	100	1,039

Source: Zhao, et al: 2000.

Note: *author's estimate.

**Who are the
overseas Canadians?**

Robin Cohen (1997) identifies some common features of a diaspora. However, overseas Canadians may have some additional unique characteristics, as became clear during an annual Canada-China roundtable organized by APF Canada and Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis/Simon Fraser University. The Canadian diaspora includes both Canadian-born and foreign-born Canadians. They choose to live overseas either for reasons of work, or in pursuit of trade or other career ambitions. Their decision to live overseas comes at different stages of their life cycle. They quite often do not have any common ethnic background, history or religion. For this reason, the maintenance, to some extent, of a Canadian identity, values and culture may be a necessary condition for inclusion in the diaspora.

Common Features of a Diaspora (Cohen 1997:26)

1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
2. Alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
3. A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history and achievements;
4. An idealization of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;
5. The development of a return movement that gains collective approbation;
6. A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate;
7. A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least, or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
8. A sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement; and
9. The possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.

It is clear that 2.7 million overseas Canadians, or 8.8% of the resident population, are a significant community that Canada cannot afford to ignore. Their strategic location in key global markets is also a strong indication that there is a potential long-term economic and political benefit to Canada in developing ties with these communities.

How Does a Diaspora Matter?

Diaspora has growing international role ...

The significance of the diaspora is not only because of its size and location, but also because of an increasingly important role that diasporas are playing in international economics and politics. Many countries, such as Israel and Armenia, regard their diasporas as strategically vital political assets, while others, such as India, the Philippines and other migrant-source countries, have recognized the major economic contributions their diasporas make through remittances (Vertovec, 2005). The significance of diasporas varies from country to country and from time to time. It can be viewed from economic, political and cultural perspectives.

Different Types of Diasporas (Cohen 1997)	
Type	Examples
Victim or refugee	Jews, Africans, Armenians, Palestinians, Irish
Imperial or colonial	Ancient Greek, British, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French
Labour or service	Indentured Indians, Chinese, Japanese
Trade or commerce	Venetians, Lebanese, Chinese

Economic impact

... with impacts on economic ties ...

In the economic area, studies suggest that diasporas have significance in a number of ways:

Taste effect and trade creation. Diasporas can create trade through a taste effect: people living overseas bring with them a preference for products from their countries of origin, thereby creating a “home-bias” for consumer products. This taste preference can directly create new trade flows to their countries of residence. The most common example of this newly created trade through a taste effect is an increase in certain food imports.

Network effect and trade and investment facilitation. Diasporas can play a role in alleviating problems of contract enforcement and providing information about opportunities in international trade and investment activities through business and social networks operating across national borders. For instance, ethnic Koreans can play a role in mediating trade and investment disputes between South Korea and the US. This function can lower the transaction costs of trade and reduce the risks of international trade significantly. At the same time, transnational diaspora networks can help investors to find joint-venture partners, producers to find appropriate distributors and manufacturers to find suitable parts suppliers.

Network effect and business creation. A diaspora network can also help in cross-boarder business creation. A recent study by the World Bank Institute in Washington, D.C., found that professionals, venture capitalists and entrepreneurs of Indian origin helped promote India as an outsourcing destination. While other low-cost destinations are slowly catching up with India in outsourcing, the country will retain its edge because of the growing influence and expertise of the Indian diaspora, particularly in the US, Canada and the UK. A key factor is the increase in organized networking and mentoring that the diaspora community can provide to businesses engaged in outsourcing.

Remittance and cross-border fund transfers. The monetary contribution of diasporas to economic development and poverty reduction in their countries of origin is clear. According to the Asian Development Bank, in 2002, global official remittances totalled US\$88 billion. Unofficial flows were perhaps as much again. These figures dwarf flows of official development assistance. Traditionally, the practice of overseas ethnic groups transferring funds to their homeland is very common, although there is an increasing trend of also transferring funds overseas from a country of origin. This is sometimes preparation for emigration to a developed country, and sometimes because heads of diaspora families return to countries of origin for higher-paying jobs and send money for living expenses to their families still abroad. Other times the funds are sent to students abroad. These two-way cross-boarder fund transfers have significant impacts not only on a country's balance of payments account, but also on development of the country of origin in general. It also requires country-specific financial services to facilitate the cross-border transaction mechanisms. This is especially apparent among the Philippine diaspora which has developed a myriad of specialist remittance agencies worldwide.

Human capital and technology transfer. Many nations with net emigration flow have long worried about the economic impact of losing their best and brightest people to the opportunities presented in richer countries. This "brain drain" does have an impact. However, increasingly the effect is positive, with a new focus on "brain gain" or "brain circulation." The challenge for many developing countries is to find ways to help talented and ambitious people make the most of their skills, both at home and abroad. The pool of native-born talent living overseas is playing an increasing role in developing business opportunities and public services in a large number of countries. The technology sectors in Taiwan, South Korea and China have expanded rapidly, relying in large part on diaspora professionals returning from the US. Diaspora entrepreneurs and investors can play a critical role in bringing new ideas and ways of doing business to their nations. By sharing new knowledge and fusing it with local customs they can help speed the adoption and acceptance of change. As citizens, or as least ethnic cohorts, they can deflect criticism that capitalism is a foreign import.

Examples of the Economic Importance of a Diaspora

- A doubling of the Korean immigrant population would increase Korea's national per capita income growth by 0.1 to 0.2 percentage points (Bergsten, 2003:70).
- A 1% increase in the ethnic Chinese population's share of *country x* leads to a 3.8% or higher increase in cumulative FDI in China (Gao, 2000).
- A 10% increase in immigrants in Canada leads to a 3% increase in Canadian imports and a 1% increase in Canadian exports to the immigrant group's country of origin (Head and Ries, 1998).
- One additional immigrant in Canada beyond the 1995 level would expand exports to his/her country by C\$312 and expand imports by C\$944 (Wagner, Head and Ries, 2002).
- India receives US\$14 billion in official remittances; the Indian diaspora's estimated collective incomes are US\$160 billion (one-sixth of Indian's GDP).
- Nineteen of the top 20 Indian software businesses were founded by, or are managed by, professionals from the Indian diaspora. The industry relies on diaspora-led professional organizations in India and abroad, and diaspora-led subsidiaries in key markets such as the US for new ideas, new technologies and new markets.

An exchange of goods and services between Canada and its diaspora communities should prove mutually beneficial. However, institutional infrastructure could direct more benefits derived from trade and investment to Canada. The recognition of citizenship succession rights for children of the diaspora, for example, could enhance the return of young overseas Canadians to Canada. This continued flow of intergenerational human capital would

reinforce the first generation diaspora ties and build on a dynamic relationship without the need for visas since diaspora children would be Canadian citizens.

Another issue, specifically for Canada, is Ottawa's policy of levying taxation on the worldwide income on Canadian residents or Canadians living overseas but maintaining a home or other material ties with Canada. Many of the diaspora have not retained substantive ties with Canada specifically to avoid this tax obligation. However, a case could be made that there is potentially great benefit to Canada by allowing Canadians living abroad to maintain closer links with Canada without facing a tax liability. This gain would offset the small amount of tax revenue that would be foregone.

Political impact

...on political relations ...

A diaspora can also have a political dimension. Vertovec (2005) and others describe a variety of ways in which internationally dispersed social groups mobilize and undertake a range of electoral and non-electoral political activities, including:

- Lobby host countries to shape policies in favour of, or in opposition to, a homeland government;
- Influence homelands through their support of, or opposition to, governments;
- Give financial and other support to political parties, social movements and civil society organizations; and
- Sponsor terrorism or the perpetuation of violent conflict in the homeland.

Vertovec (2005) concludes that even though they reside outside their own or their parents' home countries, many people regard themselves as legitimate members of its collective identity and socio-political order. Diasporas powerfully embody broader trends in the changing nature of nation-states. Today, national/ethnic identification, political community and place of residence do not automatically fit together neatly. Instead, migrants have multiple attachments that modern technology has facilitated. Their political identities and practices are shaped between and within the contexts of both migrant homelands and host societies. This is an irreversible trend that policy-makers should consider when making any adjustments to immigration and integration policies. We cannot expect today's migrants simply to cut their roots to their former homelands.

In the Canada's context, currently it is possible but difficult to vote as a Canadian citizen abroad. A comprehensive diaspora policy would ensure ease of voting, at least at the federal level. Canada could consider, as Italy has, the right of diaspora members to run as at-large members of Parliament. Both of these initiatives would, of course, only attract diaspora members who are keen on Canada already, but it would allow them continued attachment. These political benefits to the diaspora community also imply costs, such as appearing for possible jury duty. In addition, Canada could consider extending Canadian citizenship by direct descent for three generations based upon continued political participation, as the Irish have done. Thus, when the moment is right a cadre of highly astute third generation Canadians may return to Canada when it is Canada's turn to be a tiger or a haven.

Cultural impact

... and on the strength of cultural bonds

Language and intermarriage are fundamental forces that enrich both components of the diaspora. The dual linguistic abilities of the Chinese in Canada and Canadians in China are forging new cultural links. More fundamentally, diaspora intermarriage where ethnic

Chinese in Canada intermarry with Chinese Canadian citizens abroad, will deepen cultural and family ties and extend Canadian citizenship rights through both blood ties and by virtue of country of birth. However, this optimistic scenario of rich cultural interchange coupled with economic intercourse and political interchange requires imaginative policy measures. In their absence, any diaspora can be a latter day liability when they return under duress or in old age.

What Can Canada Learn from Other Countries' Experience?

Some countries have diaspora policies

Most countries are worried about drain-drain, and about how to attract back talent that could be used by these countries. Others focus on tapping the entrepreneurs in business communities abroad to help commercial ties with these countries and to attract investment. Because of this, many countries have in place diaspora policies or are attempting to establish such policies. A few examples that could be used as benchmarks for Canada if it adopts a diaspora approach include:

Australia

Australia recognizes its overseas citizens

Traditionally, Australia — like Canada — is a destination of diasporas from many other countries. New forces may now be affecting this traditional pattern. In the 1990s, there was an upsurge in the permanent and long-term emigration of the Australia-born. The increasing mobility of Australians prompted a rethinking of the role and impacts of the international flow of people. In 2001, the Australian Research Council jointly with the Committee for Economic Development of Australia, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, and the Department of Education, Science and Training issued the first report assessing emigration from Australia, putting forward some initial ideas on policy implications.

National report urged diaspora policy

In 2003, the report was updated with more recent trends in emigration. It also presented findings of a survey of Australians residing overseas, and discussed a number of policy implications relating to emigration from Australia. It was estimated that there were 860,000 Australians living in other countries on a long-term or permanent basis in December 2001, equivalent to 4.3% cent of the 2001 resident population. In addition, there were about 265,000 “visiting citizens” or persons overseas on a shorter term basis. The report recommended that Australia should develop a national diaspora/expatriate policy, recognising that in a globalizing world a nation’s citizens and its human resources will not all be within its national borders. The report also suggested the key elements to be included in an Australian diaspora/expatriate policy should include:

- The development of mechanisms for the greater inclusion of the diaspora into the national culture and the encouragement of the expatriate community to identify with and be involved in Australia;
- Increasing the strength of linkages between the diaspora and Australia, especially business and research linkages;
- Increasing the involvement of the diaspora in the national economy; and
- The facilitation and encouragement of return migration.

China

China has world's largest diaspora

China has the largest diaspora population around the world — some 34 million. The Chinese government has long had an explicitly favourable policy toward overseas Chinese/

Chinese diasporas. At the beginning of the communist regime, the government established agencies, such as Office of Overseas Chinese Affairs under the State Council, to seek support from its diaspora for national unification and economic development. In the 1950s, the objective of the Chinese government's policy toward overseas Chinese was to promote economic and political interests. They were allowed to send money and goods to their relatives; to explore markets for Chinese goods around the world; and to make investments in their homeland. Politically, they served as activists for unification, supporting Chinese revolutionary diplomacy. The Chinese government dealt with them based on the principle of dual nationality.

Beijing sees Overseas Chinese as a bridge

The Chinese evaluated the high achievements of overseas Chinese in business and assured them of their importance. Four basic policy guidelines toward diasporas were announced in May 1989: first, to no longer recognize their dual nationality but to encourage them to obtain the nationality of the host country; second, to demand that the host government guarantee their rights and benefits; third, for them to learn to respect the laws of the host country and coexist with the people of the host country in harmony; and fourth, to promote their unity by cultivating their patriotism and love for China. The policies also focused on attracting capital, technology and intellectual expertise for both domestic economic development and overseas market development. The Chinese policy toward overseas Chinese is summed up in the 1991 Protection Law on Returned Overseas Chinese and Overseas Chinese Relatives. The key elements of the guidelines for the Chinese authorities are to support their diasporas survival and development in their host countries, and to use them as bridges of friendship and cooperation between China and foreign countries.

India

Indian diaspora has its own ministry ...

The Indian diaspora, estimated at 20 million, is the second-largest in the world, comprised of Non-resident Indians (Indian citizens living abroad) and Persons of Indian Origin (who have acquired citizenship abroad). The government of India has launched a series of policy initiatives with an emphasis on emotional, cultural, spiritual links with India, as well as utilizing scientists, academics, and the intellectual talent of the diaspora. In August 2000, the Ministry of External Affairs established a High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora, and appointed Dr. L.M. Singhvi, Member of Parliament and former High Commissioner of India to U.K., as the chairman of the committee. The committee submitted a report to the Indian government in December 2001, which led to the establishment of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs.

... and may soon be able to vote

In 2003, the Indian government announced a dual citizenship initiative, now called Overseas Citizenship, which grants overseas citizenship to persons of Indian origin from 16 countries, including Canada. The Overseas Citizenship facilitates Indian expatriates travelling to India, but does not allow them to vote. From January 9-11, 2003, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, along with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, held the first Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, an annual national Indian Diaspora Day to recognize their achievements. In the latest development, the Indian government is studying proposals that include, granting voting rights, streamlining remittances (through an Integrated Remittances Gateway), streamlining the emigration process, setting up credible mechanism for skills certification, and setting up a Diaspora Knowledge Network.

Other Counties

Many other countries have had policies toward their diasporas, implicitly or explicitly. For instance, in 2004, overseas Filipinos had the right to vote in the general election for the first time. The US expects to include expatriate Americans in its 2010 population census. Irish citizenship policy allows all children and grandchildren of overseas Irish to register as Irish citizen in a Foreign Births Register in every Irish diplomatic mission. Scotland has created the Global Scot Program to manage involvement with 800 high-placed and successful Scots around the world. Other programs are in place in Italy, Japan, South Korea, Israel and Poland. (High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora: 2001).

Does Canada Need a Diaspora Policy?

Focus of emigration has been 'brain drain'

Traditionally, Canada's approach to cross-border movements by people has focused on immigration and settlement. Considerable effort has been put into attracting qualified newcomers and assisting them to settle into life in Canada. This emphasis on immigration has overshadowed the flow of emigrants from Canada to other parts of the world. From time to time, this outflow gains public attention, especially when the "brain drain" to the US becomes the concern of newspaper headlines. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, there were a number of studies questioning whether, in fact, Canada had a "brain drain" or rather a "brain gain." One report presented by Statistics Canada showed that four times as many university graduates entered Canada as were leaving for the US, giving Canada a favourable "balance of trade" in brain power. Similarly, a "balance of payments" method is often used in evaluating the net value of the difference between immigration and emigration from the perspective of human capital investment. Many studies have reached the conclusion that Canada enjoys a net gain in value terms from the balance of immigration and emigration. This approach also has been used to calculate the difference between immigrants' giving to and taking from the Canadian Treasury. Yet the debate on whether immigrants are "heavy burdens" or "net contributors" to Canadian society is ongoing.

Size of diaspora calls for new policies

Increasingly, the "brain drain" or "brain gain" argument is no longer adequate in analysing the complex flows of migrants in and out of Canada. Recent studies of Hong Kong immigrants suggest that there is a large return flow of migrants who go back to Hong Kong, for a period of their life, to pursue business opportunities. Strategic switching between an economic pole in Hong Kong and a quality of life pole in Canada identifies each of them to be separate stations within an extended but unified social field. Given the estimated 2.7 million Canadians living overseas and the significances of diasporas in international politics and economics, it is time for Canada and Canadians to rethink the concept of "Canadian," and its policy implications.

Research Agenda for a Canadian Diaspora Policy

First step should be research effort

Traditionally, public policy discussion on "Overseas Canadians" has focused on a narrow set of issues around consular services, taxation and voting. From December 12, 2003 to July 19, 2004, the government of Canada created a cabinet position of Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs with special emphasis on Canadians Abroad, dealing mostly with Canadians who run into trouble overseas. Given that a Canadian diaspora exists, government should focus on the positive aspects of this community and on ways to cultivate and strengthen this diaspora for the long-term benefit of Canada. In order to do so, more detailed research needs to be undertaken to help in formulating an effective diaspora policy. The following are a suggested initial agenda for further study:

Identify the diaspora: There are a number of options, or practices in use around the world, including registration systems, alumni lists, special enumerations of overseas citizens, and the regular census which could include residents abroad as well as in the country. Canada should find a cost-effective way to identify the Canadian diaspora.

Canadian sense of national identity: Canadians may not have a common ethnic background, nor history nor religion. But (virtually) all Canadians accept a slate of values, namely equality, respect for cultural differences, freedom, peace and the rule of law. Is there a need to reinforce these values as the essence of Canadian identity, whether in Canada or abroad?

Facilitate civil participation: One way to link with Canadian diasporas is to encourage overseas Canadians to lend their voice to policy-making, including in elections. Canada could facilitate political participation by the Canadian diaspora, including voting.

Involve the diaspora in the national economy: Canada should review its financial regulations, particularly the taxation regime, to ensure that there are no barriers to overseas Canadians participating in the national economy, through such mechanisms as investing, saving or transferring assets.

Ease the flow of Canadians moving into and out of Canada: Canada also could examine ways to streamline procedures for Canadians moving into and out of the country, while ensuring border security.

¹ Author's calculation based on the following assumptions: (1) Canadian death rates of different periods apply to Canadians who emigrated and survived over the same periods; (2) births of emigrated Canadians are not taken into account in the diaspora because there is a lack of information to judge their citizenship. Therefore, the final column presents the number of Canadians who have emigrated from 1941 to 2001 and are assumed to have survived as of the end of 2001.

² According to Statistics Canada, the Reverse Record Check (RRC) is the means by which Statistics Canada estimates coverage in the Canadian Census of Population. The 1996 RRC included a sample of people residing in Canada at the time of the 1991 Census, as well as a sample of people entering Canada since the 1991 census. Sampled individuals were contacted to establish where they had resided at the time of the 1996 Census. Those residing in Canada ought to have been included in the 1996 census. Hence among this group, those missed in the census provided an estimate of under-coverage in the census. A by-product of the RRC is an estimate of people who were living in Canada at the time of the 1991 Census or who entered Canada between 1991 and 1996, and who were residing in the United States at the time of the 1996 Census. The survey identifies (through a direct question) whether those who moved to the United States did so on a temporary or permanent basis. Permanent movers are people who, at the time of the census, had left Canada with no intention of returning, as well as those who had resided outside Canada for at least two years but whose intentions about returning were unknown. Temporary movers are people who, at the time of the census, had resided outside Canada for at least six months with the intention of returning, or had resided outside Canada for no more than two years if their intentions were unknown.

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