

Editorial

**Immigration - by the numbers**

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Does Canada need immigration the way demographers, economists and governments say we do? Only if we think positive population and economic growth are good things.

The message conveyed in data from the 2011 **census** released this week is clear, and should come as no surprise to anyone who has been paying attention. Canada's birth rate of 1.67 children per woman is well below the minimum of two required just to maintain, never mind grow. Is that going to change? Yes, if anything it will probably drop even more. It is estimated that by the year 2030, immigration will account for virtually all of the nation's population growth.

So if we want growth, we either need to start having many more babies, or rely on and improve our methods of attracting and integrating immigrants into our society and economy. Some people, especially in the noisy anti-immigration fringe, will actually argue against this, presumably on the basis that we don't need this kind of growth, or even to grow the population at all. But think about that for a moment. Of our total population of about 34.5 million, about five million of us are age 65 and up. That segment is going to grow, and dramatically, as boomers reach retirement age. Who's going to sustain our social safety net, health care, pensions etc.? We need more young people in the workforce, in part to pay those bills, but also to grow and hopefully improve productivity. Where will these young workers come from, since Canadians aren't having enough babies to drive employment growth? Canada has always relied on immigration and it has never been more important than now.

So given its importance, why is our federal government still doing a poor job of managing it? We continue to recruit foreign-trained professionals - doctors being a prime example - but can't align them with jobs, even in areas where there is a shortage. A recent report by the Toronto-Dominion Bank slams Ottawa for its inability to adequately match immigrant talent to marketplace demands. And this at the same time as another study from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce points out that skilled labour shortages are the biggest reason Canadian companies are not more competitive.

Part of the solution to this problem is for the feds to make the skilled worker program more flexible, since 250,000 immigrants come in through this stream every year. Another is for the provinces to get involved in identifying and responding to short and medium-term labour market changes, because they can do so more nimbly than Ottawa can. Immigration Minister Jason Kenney is studying the problem. But the solutions are obvious, and while he studies, hundreds of thousands of skilled labour jobs are vacant, waiting for Canadians or immigrants with the right skill sets. What is taking so long?

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Local / News

## **HAMILTON BY THE NUMBERS; What drove Hamilton's growth?**

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Statistics Canada Wednesday released a snapshot of Hamilton taken in May 2011. It showed a city lagging behind other communities in southern Ontario, but still maintaining a steady rate of growth. Hamilton's population climbed 3.1 per cent from 2006 to 2011. That's not as high as others - Burlington, for example, grew by 6.9 per cent during the same period - but it was still an improvement on the previous five years when the population grew by only 2.8 per cent.

See what the 2011 **census** numbers are - and what they mean A6

Immigration Newcomers are boosting the numbers From 2006 to 2010, the Hamilton **Census** Metropolitan Area (CMA), which includes Burlington and Grimsby, drew 10,000 immigrants. Statistics Canada says two-thirds of the CMA growth is attributed to immigration. Hamilton Spectator file photo Jobs and a growing economy Where jobs go, people follow Hamilton's population is increasing at a slower pace than other cities nearby, but it still grew by 3.1 per cent and Hamilton's economic department attributes that in part to new jobs attracting new people. New jobs are coming from company relocations, such as that of Canada Bread. Hamilton Spectator file photo Birth rate There are more arriving than departing A small part of the growth can also be attributed to natural growth through the birth rate. The Hamilton CMA had 5,300 births compared to 4,500 deaths. special to the Hamilton Spectator

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Local / News

## Population growth slow and steady but still good

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Hamilton's 3.1 per cent population growth may look modest beside Burlington's 6.9 per cent, but it's still good, says Hamilton's economic director, Neil Everson.

"Hamilton has traditionally had a long steady growth ... But it is an increase."

New **census** data from Statistics Canada on Wednesday shows the city's population grew 3.1 per cent to 519,949 in the five years up to 2011. That's about 15,000 more than the 504,559 population in 2006.

Everson believes the growth is driven by Toronto and GTA residents and businesses relocating because of Hamilton's lower cost of living and costs of doing business and good quality of life.

Statistics Canada demographer André Lebel, however, said the growth is driven mostly by immigrants. Two-thirds of the growth in the Hamilton **Census** Metropolitan Area - a larger area than the city which includes Burlington and Grimsby - came from immigration.

Lebel couldn't say if new immigrants have ties to the business investments Hamilton has seen in the past few years. Details, including where the immigrants are coming from, will be in a future **census** report in 2013.

Arsim Aliu, the Hamilton YMCA's manager of immigration settlement services, said most new immigrants here are from South Asia - Pakistan, India, China, the Philippines and other countries.

Although a large portion comes through sponsorship and under the family reunification classification, many also come here as independents, which means they have money. Once here, they often look for business opportunities, Aliu said.

But overall, fewer immigrants than before are coming to Ontario and Hamilton.

Ontario's slower growth rate is related to fewer immigrants coming to the province, and from people leaving for other parts of the country, Lebel said.

"The proportion of immigrants settling in Ontario has been diminishing."

Although immigration still accounts for the greatest part of population growth, there is some growth in the population already here.

"Ontario still has more births than deaths," Lebel said.

Same goes for the Hamilton CMA. From 2006 to 2011, there was a natural population increase of 800 because there were 5,300 births and 4,500 deaths.

Bill Janssen, Hamilton's director of strategic services, is trying to bring more information to the numbers Stats Canada released. "There are three ways to get population growth - births, migration from other cities, and immigration."

Everson still puts a lot of emphasis on Hamilton's economic emergence for the growth.

"Canada Bread, for example, is closing three plants in Toronto - we know some of those employees have already moved here."

With companies like Canada Bread, Maple Leaf Foods and Tim Hortons opening large operations here, "people are coming for jobs and moving here. It's one of the contributing factors (of the growth)."

"We (also) had 320 new jobs in our creative industry sector in the downtown."

Everson also points out that the Real Estate Investment Network last May identified Hamilton as the third best city in Canada and best in Ontario to invest in, and in 2009, Foreign Direct Investment magazine named Hamilton the third best largest city in North America in quality of life.

He also points to the 20.8 per cent population increase in Brampton and says, "From an economic development perspective, we've beaten them in the nonresidential growth."

Hamilton's growth rate will take off, he expects, once the city gets full GO Train service in the next few years.

New Canadians take the oath of citizenship. Observers disagree on whether immigration or migration from the GTA is the principal driver of Hamilton's population growth. File photo, The Hamilton Spectator

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