COVID-19, Migration and the Canadian Immigration System: Dimensions, Impact and Resilience

Research Report

John Shields

(Professor, Ryerson University)

&

Zainab Abu Alrob

(PhD Candidate, Policy Studies, Ryerson University)

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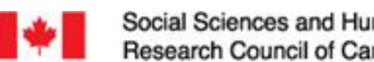
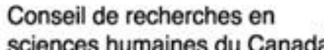
*Dr. John Shields joined the Department of Politics and Public Administration at Ryerson University in 1988, where he is a Full Professor. Dr. Shields received his PhD in Political Science from the University of British Columbia in 1989.

**Zainab is a PhD student in Policy Studies at Ryerson University, Toronto. She holds an MA in Global Governance from the Balsillie School of International Affairs, Waterloo.





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Summary

This report identifies, documents and assesses the many ways that the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has been affecting migration, borders, immigrant populations, and Canada's immigration and settlement system between March, 2020 and June, 2020. COVID-19 does not, at one level, distinguish between citizen and non-citizen nor resident and non-resident. Yet deeply embedded societal discrimination and structural inequalities mean that COVID-19 has negatively affected groups like immigrants, women, visible minorities, the poor far more than others. The report is not exhaustive in terms of analysis or identification of issues, especially given that the pandemic continues to progress and evolve and its effects will take time to comprehend fully. Consequently, this review and analysis is inherently preliminary. Rather it provides a comprehensive initial overview of the challenges COVID-19 has created for migration, immigrants and settlement. While international cases are used, our focus is on the Canadian context.

Given the recentness of the pandemic, we used extensive media sources to document developments related to our subject. We also made use of a wide range of government reports and information sources, including from public bodies such as Statistics Canada, academic and think tank-based studies, numerous webinars and online conference materials, and grey literature from the community sector and civil society. This report is centred on reporting on and documenting the many ways COVID-19 and the reactions to it has impacted migration, immigrants and settlement in Canada. Having gathered and assessed this considerable range and volume of material we offer a critical assessment of what this means for migrants and immigration in Canada. We draw on the concept of social resilience to help frame an understanding of these developments. We highlight the resilience shown by many migrants and the institutions that support immigration and settlement that have responded creatively during this crisis and, in many cases, are helping to mitigate the most negative effects of the pandemic on migrant populations.

Social resilience speaks to how social structures and institutions work to support society to overcome significant obstacles and crises by drawing on collective social resources. In Canada, on the domestic front, the response by public authorities to the pandemic has been a strong marshalling of an array of programs and the utilization of existing institutions to support different segments of the population, the economy, health systems, local governments under financial strain, and much more. Along with giving support to the public to enhance its own resilience to navigate COVID-19, the response has demonstrated the resilience of our health and socio-economic institutions and our political system more generally, including the settlement and immigration system. There has been the adoption of evidence-informed pragmatic approaches to policies rather than overly politicized and ideologically led responses. Nevertheless, the impacts of COVID-19 and access to protections and benefits have been uneven among different categories of immigrants and migrants. Too many have been excluded from supports even though immigrant and migrant populations confront higher unemployment and are generally more financially insecure due to the pandemic. Immigrants face greater risks of COVID-19 because of the types of jobs they work in,

many rely on public transit, and they often reside in overcrowded housing. Immigrants confront the unequal burden of COVID-19, demonstrating the precarious position of many within Canada.

In terms of borders and the international movement of migrants, Canadian actions have at various levels been problematic. The closing of borders, of course, has been very disruptive to economies that are now deeply and globally linked. Closures have stemmed the flow of international travel and other population movements, including labour mobility between countries. This has been particularly detrimental to the most vulnerable populations fleeing danger zones for safe havens or entrapped in refugee camps facing grave health and safety dangers. In response to the pandemic, the landing of most immigrants, refugees and international students in Canada has halted. More problematically, Canada has closed its border to asylum seekers crossing from the U.S., returning all such cases to U.S. authorities where they face potential deportation to their countries of origin. The rights of the most vulnerable – refugees and asylum seekers – which have been downgraded in this pandemic, needs to be restored and built into resilient migration policies and emergency responses grounded in social justice. The case of temporary farm workers reveals the dependence of advanced economies, like Canada, on cheap t foreign labour. The vulnerability of these farm workers to COVID-19 once in Canada indicates that the conditions of work, a long-standing problem, have not been adequately addressed. Again, the burden of risk from COVID-19 has fallen on the most vulnerable, temporary farm workers.

Border closure, with notable exceptions for workers deemed 'essential', has been justified as a protection against virus spread. Restrictions, however, have gone much further, in many cases becoming xenophobic nationalist reactions to 'the dangerous other' with calls for more securitization of migration. This response is consistent with government appeals for limited neoliberal forms of resilience and right-wing populist positions t that blame immigrants and other vulnerable populations, dividing society into 'winners and losers' or 'insiders and outsiders'. It calls for sacrifice in the pursuit of 'possessive individualism' ignoring the differential impacts of COVID-19, and without offering the rewards of solidarity, sharing and mutual accomplishment that can emerge in the context of collective struggle. Neoliberalism seeks to forge paths forward by dividing and polarizing, searching for those who are to be blamed and punished. In fact, such governments' own shortcomings are projected on to others in blame shifting exercises. Their heavy focus on borders is designed to shift attention away from other areas where government resources to address COVID-19 and post-pandemic rebuilding are greatly lacking.

Even for governments that have pursued more proactive and supportive approaches to COVID-19, the question arises whether the post-pandemic period will include a return to austerity and more neoliberal resilience strategies, as happened after the 2008-09 recession. Or alternatively, does this moment represent a progressive opening that embraces social resilience and addresses precarity and the structural inequities made so evident by COVID-19? Social resilience responses from governments will require an activist state. The pandemic has caused widespread economic dislocation that will not be quickly and easily reversed. Times of crises can open policy windows that provide pathways forward for sweeping structural reforms as happened with the rise of the modern welfare state in the aftermath of the Great Depression and the Second World War.

The importance of advocacy rises to the fore in the post-pandemic period. There will be struggle regarding the shape of the future. However, it is important that migrant rights groups, settlement agencies and their umbrella support organizations, and other progressive forces, engage in vigorous public advocacy for policies and programs that support open multicultural societies, anti-racism, protection of the most vulnerable migrants, and robust social programs that address structural inequality. The burden of risk must be shifted away from the individual and, through public policy and institutions, placed more squarely within the collective. These are responses centred in solidarity and social resilience.

Introduction

The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has been affecting migration, borders, immigrant populations, and Canada's immigration and settlement system. COVID-19 does not, at one level, distinguish between citizen and non-citizen nor resident and non-resident. Yet deeply embedded societal discrimination and structural inequalities mean that COVID-19 has negatively affected groups like immigrants, women, visible minorities, and the poor far more than others. The inequitable impacts have occurred in health, economic and social spheres Additionally, the closing of borders and the restrictions on mobility have presented challenges disproportionately to non-citizen groups like asylum seekers, non-status migrants and temporary foreign workers. Temporary border measures that have emerged as a response to COVID-19 have intensified existing social and economic vulnerabilities for migrant populations. Migrant groups work in various essential industries like agriculture and food services that expose them at much higher levels to COVID-19 than other workers. Migrants are also more vulnerable to loss of employment, often have restricted access to health services, live in overcrowded facilities, have precarious access to housing, and less financial capacity to manage through the pandemic.

The purpose of this report is to identify, document and assess the many challenges that COVID-19 has created for these groups. The intent is not to be exhaustive in terms of analysis or identification of issues, especially given that the pandemic continues to progress and evolve, and its effects will take time to fully comprehend. In this regard the analysis is by necessity preliminary. Rather our goal is to provide a comprehensive general overview of the challenges COVID-19 has created for migrants immigrants and immigration policy. While international cases are used, our focus is on the Canadian context. We make use of the concept of social resilience to frame an understanding of these developments. We aim to highlight the resilience shown by many migrants and the institutions that support immigration and settlement and who have responded creatively during this crisis and, in many cases, are helping to mitigate the most negative effects of the pandemic on migrant populations.

Given the recentness of the pandemic, we used extensive media sources to document developments related to the COVID-19 and migration. We also made use of a wide range of government reports and information sources, including public bodies such as Statistics Canada, academic and think tank-based studies, numerous webinars and online conference materials, and grey literature from

the community sector and civil society. This report is centred on reporting and documenting the many ways COVID-19 and the reactions to it has affected migrants, immigrants and immigration policy and programing. Having gathered and assessed this considerable range and volume of material, we offer a critical assessment of what this means for migrants and immigration in Canada. As noted below we employed a social resilience lens in shaping our reflections.

In Section 1, we discuss migration and the border. Our focus in this section is the border closures and travel restrictions that pertain to non-citizens including temporary foreign workers, international students, resettled refugees and asylum seekers. We document the many challenges, negative effects and exacerbated vulnerabilities the border restrictions have had on the rights, safety and well-being of various migrant groups. We highlight the importance of state responses that are both socially resilient and address the inequalities and vulnerabilities of migrant groups. In Section 2, we examine the role of governmental and non-governmental institutions and the economic, social, and political dimensions of COVID-19 as they pertain to immigrants and the settlement sector. The challenges and opportunities presented by COVID-19 for migration and the immigration system in Canada are addressed, as well as the value of a social resilience approach for aiding us in understanding the dynamics presented by the pandemic are reviewed. While the settlement sector has been able to shape-shift into a "new normal", there remains a gap and a progressive opening for advocacy for those disproportionately influenced by COVID-19. Post-pandemic, data gathering, knowledge sharing between the government, non-profit sector and other organizations, as well as combatting anti-(im)migrant sentiment can help develop evidence-based resilient responses and recovery.

Social Resilience as a Conceptual Frame

The concept of resilience is a useful one with which to understand the relationship between phenomena like the COVID-19 pandemic and migration and borders. Resilience can help clarify processes related to the impacts of crises and the roles of policies, institutions and agencies in the resulting societal dynamics. Resilience is about how systems and people face challenges and are able to marshal resources to overcome setbacks, obstacles and crises (Akbar and Preston 2019, May, like a pandemic, to move to recovery and even to positively transform circumstances in the post-crisis period. There are, however, different conceptual approaches to resilience that embody contrasting understandings of the processes necessary to overcome adversity. These approaches to resilience can lead to opposing pathways regarding matters like the roles of institutions and policies in building resilient societies.

Neoliberal understandings of resilience stand in opposition to the concept of social resilience that we adopt in this paper. The neoliberal conceptualization of resilience is centred around the individual and focuses on their capacities and responsibilities to engage in hard work and individual enterprise to overcome adversity. Neoliberal understandings of resilience are dismissive of the active role of the state and non-profit and private institutions' contributions in overcoming challenges (Hall and Lamon 2013). Rather it is individual effort and the workings of free market forces that are the resilience generators. In the more general case of immigrants and their ability

to settle in a new country, for example, immigrant successes in overcoming the adversities encountered in settlement are cast as the product of their individual effort; i.e., their willingness and ability to resiliently persevere in the face of obstacles (Leary 2018).

Neoliberal notions of resilience contrast sharply with the approach of social resilience. Social resilience, while recognizing the role and importance of individual actions, emphasizes the broader system that society operates in, including the many social institutions that support populations and social systems. Resilience, in this approach, is a dynamic process that is not just about seeking to restore a past condition, but can, through human agency, be engaged in transformation that is more fundamental. Social resilience recognizes inequalities and power differentials in the social structure. As such, the dynamic of transformative processes can be about addressing and altering these along more equitable lines. Social resilience constitutes a shift away from an individualist perspective to the idea of interdependence (DeVerteuil 2015). Public policy and programing are regarded as vitally important in addressing obstacles and crises to help build resilient responses by immigrants and others. Institutions like health and social welfare structures, and the non-profit settlement sector, among others, are collective bases of support that are the foundation of socially resilient systems. Of course, structures that have been used to reinforce systems of deep inequality can be obstacles to recovery and may need reform before they can be true sources of resilience that is transformational (DeVerteuil and Golubchikov 2016). The social resilience approach is, accordingly, one that is insightful for helping to understand many aspects of the relationship of COVID-19 with migration/immigration in Canada and beyond.

SECTION 1: Migration and the Border

Canadian Border Closings and the Shutting Out of Asylum Seekers

Responses to COVID-19 have been characterized by border closures and restrictions on mobility. Following the declaration of the Coronavirus as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020 over 180 countries moved to close their borders and impose travel restrictions on foreigners (Harris 2020, March 20; McAuliffe and Bauloz 2020). According to the PEW Research Centre, 91% of the world's population by April 2020 resided in countries where non-citizens are restricted from entry (Connor 2020). These measures quickly transformed the pandemic from a health crisis to one of mobility (Marchetti and Boris 2020). In general, OECD countries, like Canada, have acted in similar ways regarding border restriction concerning COVID-19 (OECD 2020).

Canada's first travel restrictions were announced on March 16, 2020 after the federal government closed its border to non-citizens and non-residents (CBC 2020, March 17) (For a timeline of the formative period of COVID-19 developments in Canada see *Appendix 1*). Exempt from these travel restrictions were diplomats, those with family members in Canada, and U.S. citizens (Harris 2020, March 16). Further restrictions were placed on asylum seekers who were arriving from the

U.S. between regular ports of entry. On March 17, 2020, Canada announced that it would return asylum seekers to the United States (Harris 2020, March 20). This policy builds on the Safe Third Country Agreement where asylum seekers arriving at official ports of entry are returned to the United States. However, asylum seekers crossing at other points into Canada have had the ability to apply for asylum and be processed in Canada (Abu Alrob and Shields 2020). The March 17, 2020 policy ended this process and for the pandemic period warrants the return of all asylum seekers to the U.S. regardless of their point of entry (Nicholas Fraser 2020).

Prior to this announcement, the federal government had identified its plans to screen and quarantine asylum seekers arriving from the U.S. for 14 days (Bensadoun 2020). Before they were reversed, these plans were praised by UNHCR as it meant that asylum seekers would continue to have access to refugee protection (Macklin 2020). The restrictions on asylum arrivals were highlighted by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as a "temporary measure" in response to "exceptional times" (CBC News Live, 2020, March 20). He further emphasized that these border restrictions are "in line with Canada's values on the treatment of refugees and vulnerable people" and emerged out of negotiations with the United States to find "a mutually acceptable process to deal with irregular migration" (CBC News Live, 2020, March 20).

Refugee advocates were quick to criticize the turning back of asylum seekers arguing that U.S. asylum ended with the Trump administration's COVID-19 border measures. On March 20, The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention in the U.S. issued an order for the deportation of "non-citizens arriving overland" (Lakhani 2020). Accordingly, the U.S. government announced emergency COVID-19 measures which gave its immigration and border officials "the authority to bypass immigration law" over fears of the spread of Corona (Miroff 2020). As of April 8, around 10,000 asylum seekers arriving to the U.S. have been expelled and sent back across the US-Mexico border (Lakhani 2020). It is reported that officials deport asylum seekers within an average of 96 minutes after they arrive (Miroff 2020). These deportations were immediately criticized by the UN for their violation of international law (Lakhani 2020). As such, the returning of asylum seekers crossing into Canada to the United States increases their risk of deportation from the U.S. back to their country of origin, and in many cases to life threatening situations. A July 22, 2020 Canadian Federal Court ruling has in fact declared the Safe Third Country Agreement to be a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms because of the threat posed by U.S. violations of the rights of asylum seekers (i.e., that the U.S. is not a safe third country). The judge did, however, delay the ruling for six months to allow the Canadian Government to address the situation (BBC 2020, July 22; Keung 2020, July 23).

The collective Caring for Social Justice has criticized the Canadian federal government's new restrictions on asylum seekers. They (Solidarity Across Borders 2020) noted that the "decision further encourages xenophobia in a moment that calls for global solidarity". Border closures to specific groups like migrants distinguish them as outsiders and "vectors of disease and danger" (Macklin 2020). Historically, refugees have been stereotyped as health risks that bring disease to receiving societies (Molnar 2020; The World 2020). This has generally been accompanied by "apocalyptic" descriptions that label refugees as part of a "flood or wave" (Molnar 2020). While those who do migrate through various countries may not have adequate access to health services, the risk that they will transmit a disease to a "host population is generally low" (Abubakar, Aldridge, Devakumar, et al. 2018). States have used these false assumptions to legitimize "hardline

policies" and to justify the increasing securitization of migration (Molnar 2020). There is a significant threat that the pandemic is being used by many states to further securitize migration (World Economic Forum 2020).

The border has quickly become a tool to create a hierarchy among different groups within Canada's immigration system (Macklin 2020). Asylum seekers, as evident in both Canadian and U.S. border measures, have been ranked low on this hierarchy (Macklin 2020). Many temporary migrant workers on the other hand, have moved from unskilled laborers to essential workers exempt, with conditions, from border closures and travel restrictions. The pandemic marks a departure regarding those we consider to be essential to our very survival. The pandemic has revealed temporary migrant workers' essential contributions to Canada's food security (see below).

Refugees: Addressing Human Rights and Recognizing the Contributions of Claimants in Canada

Travel restrictions and border measures have also affected refugees and the state of resettlement in receiving countries like Canada. On March 17, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) announced that resettlement for refugees would be temporarily suspended due to COVID-19 (UNHCR 2020, March 17). Resettled refugees are those who are transferred from one state to a third country that has approved their arrival and agreed to provide them with permanent settlement (UNHCR nd). Canada has been a leader in refugee resettlement, and since 2018 has surpassed the U.S. and the United Kingdom for the total number of refugees accepted (Radford and Connor 2019). The federal government had set a target to resettle 47,950 refugees in 2020 with another 31,950 refugees to be resettled by 2021 (Government of Canada 2020, March 12).[i]

Suspending resettlement means that displaced refugees will be left in refugee camps, detention or "other temporary settlements" such as impoverished, dense urban centres that also pose health and safety risks to refugees (Farge and Paperny 2020). Displaced persons often have specific health conditions, like malnutrition or psychosocial stress, that increase their vulnerability to COVID-19 (Refugees International 2020). Refugees living in camps are most vulnerable to COVID-19 as spaces are confined with no possibility of social distancing, sanitation services are not adequate, and health and medical care as well as hygiene facilities are extremely limited (Ashad 2020; Medicins Sans Frontiers 2020; Hedayet 2020). Camps in Syria, Bangladesh, and Greece host the largest and most dense refugee populations. Urgent calls have been made for the evacuation of camps including those in Greece and Bangladesh.[ii] Camps are not equipped with adequate health services, like intensive care units to be able to treat COVID-19 patients. Aside from the lack of resources, humanitarian workers on the ground are not positioned to respond to an outbreak (Refugees International 2020).

The temporary halting of refugee resettlement is understandable, but it is important to ensure that it does not turn into a permanent ban post COVID-19 (Shenoy 2020). Banulescu-Bogdan, Benton and Fratzke argue that the measures to restrict resettlement, migrants and asylum seekers are part

of “broader aims” to reduce “undesirable migration” and curtail “the openness that has been blamed for uncontrolled movements” (2020). On the other end, Walden argues that refugees and asylum seekers are not “passive victims” but rather “active contributors” (2020). To alter negative discourses, it is important for states to lift restrictions on migrant groups and leverage their human capital, in particular their medical expertise (Walden 2020). In Ireland, the Irish Media Council outlined recommendations to mobilize “refugees and asylum seekers with medical training to provide essential support” (Walden 2020). Indeed, this has been a growing trend. In the United Kingdom, hundreds of refugee doctors have been providing medical support at hospitals. The UK’s United Health Service initiative fast tracks the accreditation of foreign-born medical graduates. The United Nations has called on countries to include refugee medical graduates and professionals in their COVID-19 responses (McVeigh 2020).

Similarly, in Canada, doctors and medical professionals who have passed their exams can apply for a 30-day license to practice medicine in hospitals. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) has been issuing temporary licenses to refugees who are willing to help ease the strain at hospitals across Ontario (Brockbank 2020). In Quebec, hundreds of asylum seekers have been volunteering and working in long-term care homes (Lowrie 2020).[iii] The challenges of COVID-19 are increased for asylum seekers working in long-term care homes who often encounter substantial difficulty in getting tested and accessing health care (Lowrie 2020). Even though they have been given formal access to health care because of COVID-19, many health centres are failing to provide service to asylum seekers without a valid health card (See: http://healthcareaccessontario.herokuapp.com/), and the threat of their insecure status being reported to authorities remains high (Section 2B of this report has additional discussion of migrants and medical professionals).

Despite their contributions to fighting the pandemic, the insecurity about removal from Canada when deportations resume post-COVID-19 is real for many asylum-seekers (Stevenson and Shingler 2020). Calls have been made by several rights advocates and the federal NDP (New Democratic Party) to launch a program that grants asylum seekers, and other migrant frontline workers, permanent residency that regularizes their status (Stevenson and Shingler 2020). Quebec premier François Legault announced on May 25, that the asylum seekers who are working in long-term care homes will be considered for permanent residency through the immigration system (Shingler 2020). These applications will be reviewed “one by one” and on a “case by case” basis (Authier 2020; Shingler 2020). Legault emphasized that while the Quebec government critically needs more people working in care homes, “we have to be careful. I don't want to send the message that in the future we will accept everybody if they find a job in Quebec” (Shingler 2020). In recognition of asylum seekers’ work in long-term care, federal immigration officials have also indicated that immigration rules may be revisited to favour such workers (Bilefsky 2020). For asylum seekers, this has caused confusion over who is eligible. It has also caused those working on the frontlines but not in long-term care homes to question their ability to obtain permanent resident status post-COVID-19 (Carpenter 2020). More broadly, Canada’s refugee policies and resettlement programs need to be adjusted in the post-COVID-19 period to more effectively address refugees/asylum seekers “fleeing from pandemic situations”, to better meet Canada’s international obligations to protect human rights (Nicholas Fraser 2020) and to recognize the contributions of claimant seekers in the country.

COVID-19, Detention and Migrants: The Health Threats of Migrant Housing

Asylum seekers and refugees in Canada struggle to survive COVID-19 vulnerabilities. Those in detention centres and shelters, however, are in even more problematic and dangerous living conditions. The difficulty of social distancing in such facilities makes protection against communicable diseases very difficult. Questions are being posed about refugee camps and detention centres bordering conflict zones, in Europe, the U.S. and elsewhere in regard to health and sanitation conditions (see: Refugees International 2020). Such conditions open up the possibility for the mass spread COVID-19 that endangers not only migrants but also the domestic population (for the U.S. see Chishti and Pierce 2020 – they note that U.S. migration detention centres have already "been hotspots for disease outbreaks including the flu, measles, mumps, and chicken pox"). There are thousands of detained asylum seekers in U.S. institutions (Keller Wagner 2020).[iv] In fact, conditions in the U.S. detention centres have been so dire and the threat of the COVID-19 spread so concerning that many detainees have been asking to be quickly deported in an attempt to protect their health (Levin 2020). The aggressive deportation of asylum seekers from the U.S. to the Americas is in fact resulting in the spread of the virus. With the U.S. as the epicentre of COVID-19 in March through May, the U.S. deportation practices have posed a public health threat to the Americas, which have become new centres of infection (Blitzer 2020).

Canada's own detention facilities and refugee shelters have reported COVID-19 outbreaks (Farooqui 2020; Gros and Muscati 2020). Importantly, in contrast to the situation in the U.S., Canada has been, without fanfare, releasing migrant detainees, in the words of *Global News*, at 'unprecedented' rates (Browne 2020). The number of migrant detainees in detention centres fell by more than half by April 2020. Figures from the Canadian Border Security Services Agency (CBSA) indicate that on March 17 across Canada there were 353 migrants held in detention but on April 19 this had fallen to 147 (Browne 2020). The closing of the international border to international travel and the refusal of Canadian authorities to accept asylum seekers crossing the U.S. border has also largely curtailed the flow of migrants who potentially could be detained. The Canadian government's flexible response to detention has been a positive response driven by medical evidence.

It is not just refugees and irregular migrants that face threats (the case of farm workers will be addressed below). Legal migrant workers are also highly vulnerable to infection in work camps and migrant housing facilities. Nearly all the COVID-19 cases in the early stage in the Middle East, for instance, have been among such workers who are trapped and unable to return home due to travel restrictions (Chulov 2020; also see: McQue 2020).[v] Qatar, which has some two million migrant workers, has one of the highest rates of COVID-19 infection per capita, concentrated among 'guest workers'. Now unemployed, many of these workers have become desperate for food pleading with employers and charities for assistance (Pattisson and Sedhai 2020). The danger of the spread of COVID-19 will not be able to be contained in these work camps for long and will likely spread to the general population overtime.

International Students: Student Retention and COVID-19

Following the closure of the Canada-U.S. border to all non-essential travel on March 21, exemptions for seasonal agricultural workers, caregivers, international students and other temporary foreign workers followed (Harris 2020, March 21). International students significantly contribute to Canada's economy and immigration. In recent years, Canada has become one of the top three destinations for international students (Akbar and Preston 2019, December). There were 642,000 international students in Canada in 2019 (El-Assal 2020, February 20). In 2018, they filled 170,000 jobs and "contributed $21.6 billion to Canada's GDP" (Government of Canada 2019). In many smaller communities with post-secondary institutions, the contributions of international students to local economies are particularly significant (Hagar 2020).

Financial stability is a pressing issue for students and COVID-19 has further exacerbated their financial vulnerabilities. International students pay three times the average of domestic students for tuition fees and the number of students has been increasing significantly over the last number of years (Statistics Canada 2019).[vi] Despite the travel exemptions, only those international students who earned $5000 or more in 2019 are able to access the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). Since international students are only allowed to work 20 hours a week while studying, many are unlikely to meet the $5000 threshold, leaving them ineligible to receive financial support (Quinn 2020). Most it appears, have also been excluded from accessing the Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB). Their non-permanent resident and non-citizen status also deems them ineligible for loan programs like the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). This has left some international students in difficult financial positions with no option but to return to their country of origin (Wong 2020).

For those who want to join Canadian institutions in Fall 2020, both health and financial factors create considerable uncertainty (Alam 2020; Keung and Teotonio 2020). This is likely to have a negative effect on educational institutions that have become increasingly reliant on the revenue brought by these students. Foreign students make up 50% of tuition revenue for some universities (Wong 2020). Across all Canadian institutions, foreign tuition fees amount to $6 billion a year. With COVID-19 and most universities moving classes online, "billions of dollars are at risk" for post-secondary institutions which could "deliver a financial blow to universities" and colleges (Keung and Teotonio 2020) and the communities that service post-secondary institutions and student bodies. It has been estimated that COVID-19 could result in a reduction of international students of between 20% to 50% (Hagar 2020). Accordingly, post-secondary institutions have been advocating for online courses for foreign students. While this seems to be a natural progression for university education, international students are required normally to "attend most classes in-person to receive a post-graduation work permit" (Keung and Teotonio 2020). For those already in Canada, e-learning will not negatively influence their permit application (Keung and Teotonio 2020), a concession also extended to international graduate students e-learning from abroad (Hall 2020; Quinn 2020; Keung 2020, May 15), but not to students starting their programs in the summer and fall of 2020.

International students have also become an important source of economic class immigrants. International students upon completion of their degrees are very well placed to take advantage of the Canadian Experience Class stream.[vii] In fact, international students are excellent candidates for permanent residency as they are well positioned to overcome the barriers other migrants face in Canada. They have a Canadian degree, high human capital, good language skills, connections to the communities where they obtained their education, and, often, Canadian work experience. After graduation, international students are allowed to work in the country for up to three years. In this regard, international students are ideal immigrants. Their ability to work post-graduation and the apparently smooth pathway to immigration is a major driver of the popularity of Canada as a choice for international students. The Canadian government has become flexible in adapting programing and rules around international students due to COVID-19 in an attempt to accommodate students with the goal of international student retention given their strategic economic importance to Canada.

The Case of Temporary Farm Workers: COVID-19 and the Transformation of Dirty, Dangerous and Demeaning Work into Essential Work

Temporary migrant workers, in particular agricultural workers, have been a major concern in Canada and elsewhere since food security is threatened by migrant labour shortages (Hooper and Le Coz 2020). Canada is heavily dependent on foreign temporary farm workers for its agricultural production (Statistics Canada 2020, April 17).[viii] For temporary foreign workers, the travel exemptions came after Canadian farmers strongly voiced concerns about a shortage of farm labour and the consequences for seasonally sensitive food production (Hooper and Le Coz 2020). Canada's agricultural sector heavily depends on temporary foreign workers from Mexico and Caribbean countries (Statistics Canada 2020, April 17). In Ontario alone, 20,000 migrant workers are relied upon for farm work including planting and harvesting (Dubinski 2020). Following the federal government's travel restrictions for non-citizens and non-residents, Ontario farmers warned that these measures "have the potential to devastate" the agricultural sector and local food supply (Lupton 2020).[ix]

Given concerns expressed about the food supply, the federal government announced that migrant workers, including agricultural as well as fish and seafood workers, will be exempt from travel restrictions and border closures on March 21, 2020 to "maintain the country's food security" (Harris 2020, March 21; Orton 2020). The Ministry of Agriculture and Agri-Food stated that they would both arrange and pay for the flights of migrant workers who will arrive through the Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP) (Kate Dubinski 2020). The federal government also announced its plans to waive the Labour Market Impact Assessment - a document employers must normally complete to prove their need for a migrant worker (Orton 2020; Government of Canada nd; Government of Canada 2020, April 22). The maximum period employers may hire a migrant worker has also been extended from one to two years (Orton 2020). A mandatory 14-day quarantine is now required for all newly-arrived migrants (Dubinski 2020). Employers must arrange quarantine facilities and monitor the health of those in quarantine (Government of Canada 2020, April 22).

The argument that there exists ample domestically sourced labour in a time of very high levels of unemployment to do agricultural work is contradicted by the reality that this is not the kind of work that will be done by the native-born population (Yarr 2020).[x] This kind of work has been deemed 3-D labour – Dirty, Dangerous and Demeaning – but now with the pandemic has been recalibrated as 3-D+E labour – Dirty, Dangerous, Demeaning and Essential – as this work has come to be widely recognized as vital to the smooth running of advanced economies (World Economic Formum 2020). The fact that non-domestic workers are required to fill this labour need is evident in many countries. The UK is a case in point, where Romanian migrant workers have had to be recruited as fruit pickers (O'Carroll 2020). In Italy, the shortage of labour in the agricultural sector has been so severe that the government has made moves to regularize migrant workers to address the labour shortage (Palumbo and Corrando 2020; CERC 2020, May 6). Many European countries, the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand face similar farm labour shortages as in Canada and have moved to ease border restrictions to address the demand (Hooper LeCoz 2020).

Ironically, in the U.S., immigrant farm workers, many of whom are 'illegal' (at least half of American farm workers are undocumented), have now been deemed essential workers. They have been given letters from their employers stating that The Department of Homeland Security considers farm workers to be "critical to the food supply chain". Such letters do not guarantee that undocumented workers are protected from detention but given the current circumstances, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement noted that it will "temporarily adjust its enforcement posture". In essence, undocumented farm workers have a new status, being both 'illegal' and 'essential' (Jordan 2020 1, 6).[xi]

Exempting temporary foreign workers from travel restrictions has made clear their essential role in the food industry and in ensuring food security in many high income countries. However, their vulnerability has also been revealed, as well as their poor working and living conditions. Migrant workers, in Canada, tend to live in overcrowded and inadequate accommodation (Basok and George 2020). They are usually housed in small bunkhouses with 4-8 people living in one room. Further, a total of 30 people may be housed on one floor and share two bathrooms (Kelly 2020). This makes it impossible for workers to social distance. On May 11, 23 temporary foreign workers tested positive for COVID-19 at Byland Nurseries, an agriculture food business in British Colombia (Thom 2020), evidence that the labour conditions of migrants are inadequate to protect them from COVID-19 (Kelly 2020). Further, at least 55 workers at Greenhill Produce have tested positive for COVID-19 in Kent Bridge, Ontario (CBC 2020, May 14). On June 1, a Mexican farm worker in Southwestern Ontario became the first farm worker to die of COVID-19 (CBC News 2020, June 1), and two additional workers have since died. Numerous others have required critical medical care. Other farms in parts of Ontario have seen major spikes in COVID-19 cases.[xii] The Government of Mexico reacted to this situation by pausing migrant worker program on June 15. This delayed the travel of around 5,000 Mexican workers to Canada (Levitz 2020). By June 21, Mexico and Canada quickly came to an agreement to resume the flow of migrant workers with Canada increasing the inspection of work sites and the imposition of heavy fines for violations. Provisions for improved health and safety on farms, and more rapid medical attention for ill farm workers were also instituted. The agreement will be overseen by Mexican and Canadian government authorities (Reuters 2020).

It has become clear during this crisis that although migrant farm workers are essential, they remain inadequately protected (Chisholm 2020). Organizations that defend the rights of migrant groups argue that poor working and living conditions have been exacerbated by COVID-19 and are endangering the lives of migrants (Kelly 2020). Other groups, like the Migrant Workers Centre in Vancouver, argue that the "contributions" of migrant workers have not been "valued" in the past despite the essential qualities of their labour. COVID-19 has highlighted how important migrants are to the Canadian food system (Fraser 2020, April 30).

It follows that guidelines have been put in place by governments and other organizations like the United Nations International Organization for Migration to protect the rights of migrants. These guidelines target businesses and employers who play a central role in ensuring that the health and rights of migrants are protected. They encourage employers to share the responsibility of protecting migrants and to work collaboratively with governments to protect migrants and ensure that they are not disproportionately affected by COVID-19 (IOM 2020, April 7). It should be noted that the guidelines are not enforceable (Emmanuel 2020, April 9). Canadian employers may also find it difficult to comply with the COVID-19 protection measures put in place by the federal and provincial governments. To ease these difficulties, the Canadian government now offers farmers $1500 for every temporary foreign worker they hire to mitigate the costs associated with the need to create safer work and living arrangements that protect workers from COVID-19 (Seldon 2020). On May 5, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced support for agriculture businesses and farmers. The federal government invested $252 million in support for the food industry and farmers. This provides targeted support like Emergency Processing Funding for farmers and food processers to adjust to COVID-19 health regulations (Office of the Prime Minister of Canada 2020, March 23 & May 5). These measures, however, do not fully address farmers' problems around delayed work starts and the need to hire fewer workers because of distancing requirements.[xiii]

For some temporary migrant farm workers, permanent residency is not an option despite the fact that they perform essential work. On May 22, 2020, the federal government announced the Agri-Food pilot program (Emmanuel 2020, May 19). Under this program, non-seasonal agriculture industry workers (e.g., pig and cattle ranching, egg, poultry or other animal production) and those working in greenhouse and nursery production (i.e. mushroom production) can apply for permanent residency (Government of Canada 2020, May 28). The pilot program "recognizes contributions of workers" to Canada and aims to "build resilience in the agriculture sector" by securing a steady intake of foreign workers (Fraser 2020). The pilot runs to 2023, and a maximum of 2,700 principal applicants over this period who work in full year agricultural operations will be accepted (Thevenot 2020). Seasonal temporary farm workers are excluded from this initiative. This pilot program, which on the surface aims to secure a steady flow of foreign food workers and limit future labour shortages (Emmanuel 2020, May 19) is a meaningful initiative. Nevertheless, it is limited in scope, which means that the overall goal will be difficult to achieve. The program may be more of a symbolic measure, especially given a history of policy and regulations in the Canadian immigration system that undervalues the economic contributions of 'low-skill' agricultural workers.

The pilot program is yet another indication of the hierarchy created among different migrant groups (Macklin 2020). Temporary migrant workers have become essential, not only to Canada's food security now, but post-pandemic. For this, they are worthy of a pathway to citizenship. In essence,

the work performed by such temporary workers is deemed essential but the workers themselves are not (Macklin 2020). The case of temporary farm workers reveals concerning inequities associated with border policies and migration, all of which have been more fully revealed by the pandemic. To build resilient border policies requires addressing migrant rights and respecting the value of their labour in meaningful ways.[xiv]

In what follows, we examine initial governmental and non-governmental institutional strategies to COVID-19 and outline how they constitute a resilient response. We consider some of the more direct economic, social and political dimensions of COVID-19 as they relate to immigrants in Canada.

SECTION 2: Institutions, Immigrants and the Economic, Social & Political Dimensions of COVID-19

Section 2 of this report is divided into two parts. The first examines key state and non-state institutions and the role they have played during the pandemic. The second part considers some of the more direct economic, social and political dimensions of COVID-19 in relation to immigrant populations in Canada.

A) Institutions: State and Non-state Actors During COVID-19

Enhancing the State to Build Social Resilience

Led by the Canadian federal government, the state has been proactive in its measures to address the health and economic consequences of the pandemic. As with most governments elsewhere, the Canadian government was slow to realize the full dangers and impacts of COVID-19 until multiple cases of infection appeared and the voices of public health officials became amplified. Once the dimensions of the pandemic became clear, the government moved rapidly. In Canada, during the formative period of moving to manage the effects of COVID-19, there was considerable coordination and support between different levels of government and the various health authorities. Health- centred evidence-informed decision making clearly guided state actions; however, the actions adopted went well beyond health and embraced a wide range of measures to address the social and economic fallout from the pandemic. The overall government messaging during the active pandemic stage emphasized its role in assisting and leading in health matters and financial supports. The other message was that government is working closely with heath experts to develop policies and programs that protect the health and safety of Canadian residents. What is also noteworthy, from our own close observation of media reports, is that a hopeful 'resilience discourse' also emerged, with government leaders and others speaking to the idea that Canadians and our institutions are resilient and able to manage through this crisis and that they would emerge stronger (see for example: The Canadian Press, 2020, March 11; Lornc 2020). This can be thought

of as one of the ways that Canadian political leaders attempted to set a tone of calm, reassurance and confidence during the crisis.

The public's response was very positive and polling indicated strong support for the state and its leaders at all jurisdictional levels. Confidence in government, which had previously been weak, rose sharply with trust in government standing at some 70% by May 2020, a 20% increase from before the pandemic (MacCharles 2020, May 23, IN, IN4). Immigrants' trust levels in government also tracked closely to the overall trends in Canadian public opinion, with more recent immigrants demonstrating even stronger trust levels (Association of Canadian Studies et al. 2020, May 1). The Canadian state's ability to address the public's concerns and needs in a timely fashion through public policy has worked to restore the public's trust and faith in the capacity and relevance of government in their lives. Having strong levels of trust is key to fostering social cohesion and is important in building and sustaining the public measures necessary to combat COVID-19. If people have strong trust in public authorities, there will be higher levels of compliance with COVID-19 health and safety guidelines. In contrast, a society with weak trust and strong social divisions is one where it is considerably more difficult for public authorities to effectively implement measures to manage a pandemic.[xv]

The range and extent of policies and programing in Canada to address the pandemic has been considerable, even on a scale that compares with measures adopted by governments to address the Great Depression of the 1930s. The full range of measures are too extensive to cover comprehensively here. In this section of the report, we restrict ourselves to addressing a few of the programs that have particular importance to the immigrant population in Canada. Some other relevant policies are discussed in other sections of this report. An excellent summary of the full range of measures in Canada at federal and provincial/territorial levels of government is provided by Norton Rose Fulbright (2020).

The Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) has been one of the key pieces of federal legislation to support those who have lost employment or substantial hours of work because of COVID-19. This measure was introduced in conjunction with modifications to Employment Insurance (EI) benefits in order to enhance supports to the unemployed. The CERB pays $2,000 a month for up to four months (later extended to up to 24 weeks). To qualify one must have earned $5,000 in the last year (Monsebraaten 2020, A1) and have a social insurance number (SIN). It is telling that the $2,000 level matches very closely, as Denna Ladd of the Toronto-based Workers Action Centre notes, to $15 an hour for full-time work (35 hours a week) which many labour activists have argued is necessary for a 'living minimum wage' (Democracy Dialogues 2020, May 19).

Many immigrants have benefitted from this measure. At the same time, some migrants have not due to irregular immigration status and/or lack of a SIN. Additionally, more recent immigrants with a SIN who have just started to work in the Canadian labour market may not have earned the $5,000 minimum in 2019 to qualify for the benefit (Democracy Dialogues 2020, May 19). The number of migrants who may be in such a position is unknown. However, Shamira Madhany of

World Educational Services (WES) has estimated that half a million immigrants do not qualify for the CERB (Association of Canadian Studies et al. 2020, May 1). As of late May, 2020 about 7.8 million workers applied for CERB (Monsebraaten 2020, A1)

Social assistance recipients who also work part-time are eligible for the CERB. There are about 75,000 Ontarians in this situation. The federal government asked provinces, which control social assistance payments, to exempt the federal benefit from claw back provisions in order to support the most vulnerable. British Colombia, the Yukon and Northwest Territories granted this exemption, Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta approved a partial claw back, and the other provinces, including Quebec, clawed back all the federal benefit. In Ontario (Monsebraaten 2020, A1, A2) welfare recipients are allowed to keep $1,100 of the CERB. It is unclear how many immigrants might be negatively impacted by this situation but we do know that refugee populations in the first five years in Canada are more likely to be recipients of social assistance (Crossman 2013); hence, they are more likely to be negatively affected.

The federal government has also attempted to prevent layoffs by offering some employers Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) assistance. Under the CEWS, the government will pay up to 75% of the wages (with a $847 per week limit) of employees retained. The program runs from March 15 until the end of August 2020. The federal government also introduced measures to provide a small business wage subsidy, work sharing and various other supports for businesses and the self-employed. In conjunction with the provinces, the federal government also introduced a business rent relief program. The provinces, including Ontario and Quebec, have focused a good deal of their programing efforts on measures to support businesses through the crisis (Norton Rose Fulbright 2020). Immigrant owned businesses and self-employed immigrants should benefit from such measures.

Two other measures are likely to have important benefits for immigrants: the temporary measures to increase the Canada Child Benefit payment by $300 per child and an increase to the GST Rebate for low- and modest-income individuals and families (Norton Rose Fulbright 2020). Refugees with large families are likely to be beneficiaries of the child benefit increase, as well as many immigrants who have low or modest incomes.

During the pandemic, the Ontario and Quebec governments have each provided bonus 'pandemic pay' for many low-waged frontline workers in the human services fields. Ontario added a $4 an hour premium to such workers' pay cheques, while Quebec has provided an additional $100 per week (Norton Rose Fulbright 2020). Given that many of these jobs are held by immigrant workers, the extra wages will benefit them through the height of the pandemic period. The payments are in part a recognition of the need for greater fairness to frontline workers and an acknowledgement, during a time of crisis, of the value of their work. There is also an implicit recognition that such work is dangerous, and greater incentives are needed to maintain the supply of such 'essential workers'. It remains to be seen whether wage increases will be maintained after pandemic conditions have receded.[xvi]

Ontario has waived its 3-month waiting period for access to public health care for immigrant newcomers to the province during the pandemic. The Premier of Ontario also declared on March 20th that all persons resident in the province regardless of immigration status would be granted access to publicly funded hospitals and medical services (Hudson 2020). Quebec and BC introduced their own measures ensuring access to COVID-19 treatment and medical care for all categories of migrants (IMO 2020, Snapshot 22). These were necessary and positive developments, but it is not clear whether migrants with irregular status will be targeted by border control authorities for deportation after the pandemic.

Detention of migrants with irregular status has been amplified by a new Ontario Government order under the Emergency Management and Civil Protections Act (EMCPA). Regulation 114/20 gives police and other enforcement authorities the power to require individuals believed to be in violation of emergency COVID-19 measures to show identification. This places at particular risk irregular status migrants who may not have acceptable ID. It will likely increase the interaction between the undocumented and law enforcement authorities, who may abuse their authority and engage in acts like racial profiling (International Human Rights Program et al. 2020).

Local governments have also been active during the pandemic, although comparatively their role has been less overt. Municipal governments' funding and borrowing limitations mean programs providing financial support have been left largely to senior orders of government. Nonetheless, settlement of immigrants occurs at the local level, and municipal governments have long played an important role in welcoming and supporting newcomer populations through access to city services and other welcoming initiatives.[xvii] Sanctuary city policies have been important in protecting those with precarious migration status by providing access to many city services.[xviii] As Hudson, for example, notes: "The Toronto Newcomer Office, Toronto Public Health, and the City's Emergency Operations Committee meet daily to triage emerging issues and ensure that residents without other supports can receive at least some of what they need. They are joined by several health networks and immigrant and refugee-serving community organizations, all of which have experience working with migrants and co-implementing access without fear policies" (2020). This is part of a 'leaving no one behind approach' (IMO 2020, Snapshot #22).

In normal times, libraries are important institutions for immigrants primarily because they provide information and access to technology including Wi-Fi. Immigrants use libraries at much higher rates than the rest of the population (Sharma 2016). Shutting down face-to-face city services, especially libraries, has negatively affected immigrants' access to many services and activities. Importantly, Wi-Fi at library branches has been left on and many of those without internet access have gathered outside library buildings to take advantage of this resource.

So far in these early days of the pandemic, governments in Canada have demonstrated that they are resilient institutions that can respond in a proactive way to address needs arising out of the pandemic. In so doing, governments have enhanced public confidence and in turn reinforced perceptions of the strength and legitimacy of public institutions. As a set of institutions, the state has proved to be a key source of social resilience in the initial days of the pandemic. The

programing has provided broad supports to Canadians including those of immigrant origin to assist them in managing through COVID-19.

The pandemic and the state's response to it are also uneven, especially when we consider specific groups of migrants. Very recent immigrants, migrants with precarious status, temporary migrant workers, international students and asylum seekers have, in various ways, been excluded from supports and protections that has increased their vulnerability. Citizenship and permanent residence status remain important markers for full inclusion under the protective coverage of the state and its pandemic supports.

IRCC is 'Open for Business' and Challenges to Meeting Planned Immigration Levels

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is the key federal department at the forefront of managing immigration and newcomer settlement services through the pandemic. In the early period of the Canadian response to the pandemic the department was understandably focused on border issues and in particular, as discussed in Section 1 of this report, working out the exemptions to border entry, which involved a delicate balancing act between public health concerns, economic considerations, and the human needs of families.

Due to COVID-19, the work of IRCC could not be conducted as usual and required adaption and innovation. The need to social distance has meant that only about 2% of IRCC staff worked on site during the COVID-19 full shutdown period, with the others working virtually from home. According to Corinne Prince, a Director General of IRCC, the demands of the crisis more than doubled the pace of work (Association for Canadian Studies et al. 2020). IRCC Deputy Minister Catrina Tapey notes that the department adapted to stay "open for business" (Association for Canadian Studies et al. 2020), including:

> … measures to allow for the temporary processing of applications that are incomplete due to difficulty in obtaining documents because of COVID-19. For example, IRCC is accepting permanent resident applications with scanned photographs, missing photographs, etc. They are requiring that applicants inform them that they could not provide the missing documents due to COVID-19, and to provide the documents once available. … IRCC is accepting new citizenship applications, although it has suspended all citizenship tests (Meurrens 2020).

Given travel restrictions and border closings, it has not been possible for the majority of those accepted for permanent residency to take up residency.

Director General Prince noted further that IRCC has been very active regarding settlement services. The department worked with service providers to virtually conclude and sign some $4 billion in 5-year settlement agreements. IRCC has also worked closely with service providers to

adapt their services for a COVID-19 environment (Association for Canadian Studies et al. 2020, May 1). This will be addressed in greater length below.

A very important development has been a significantly increased level of communication between IRCC and the settlement providers. This is important because of the rapidly evolving situation on the ground and on the policy and programing fronts. IRCC needed to understand the scale and scope of the impact of COVID-19 on settlement agencies and newcomer populations, as well as the challenges they continue to face to adjust policies and programs effectively. Consequently, the number of virtual meetings between IRCC and settlement agencies has grown significantly (Association for Canadian Studies et al. 2020).

A major question for IRCC and Canadian public policy involves immigration target levels. The current target is set at 341,000 in 2020, with a three-year levels plan of 1,053,000. The IRCC website officially remains committed to this target and to high levels of immigration into the future.[xix] As the pandemic has shown, people with skills in many different occupations are still needed. However, given the challenges posed by COVID-19, there is considerable questioning about whether proposed levels can be attained and maintained as a policy, at least in the near future. An RBC report released on May 29th projected that 2020 immigration levels will fall by about half from 2019 numbers, a decline of some 170,000. The numbers of temporary migrant workers and international student will also decline (Agopsowicz 2020; Keung 2020, May 30).[xx]

In the immediate pandemic period, the reality is that borders are for the most part closed to non-Canadian travellers and air carriers (the major way that newcomers travel to Canada) have greatly curtailed operations. Further, the depth and length of the COVID-19 recession will inevitably affect immigration policy. Levels of unemployment will be especially important. Additionally, the attention of governments has shifted to providing COVID-19 relief and reopening the economy, drawing attention away from specific policy areas like immigration.

The argument for more constrained immigration numbers revolves around the ability of the economy in recession to absorb large numbers of new immigrants. The call for a 'tap-on-tap-off' system of determining immigration levels (lower immigration levels when the economy is weak and an increase in immigration levels when the economy is growing) may well find support.[xxi]

One pragmatic response to the 'tap-on-tap-off' approach to migration numbers given Canada's continuing need for permanent immigration to address a shrinking labour market and an aging population is to adjust the full range of incoming migration, not just narrowly focus on permanent immigration numbers. Canada admits very high numbers of temporary migrants to meet labour market needs, a trend that has been growing for more than a decade (Lu and Hou 2019; Statistics Canada 2020, July 22). As we have seen with farm labour, Canada needs temporary workers, especially in key occupations. However, there is a question as to whether Canadian's immigration system has become over dependent on temporary migration to fill labour market gaps. In a period of reduced labour demand, because of the negative economic effects of COVID-19, Naomi Alboim, Senior Policy Fellow with the Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration at Ryerson University, suggests focusing the decrease in migration numbers not on

permanent immigration but on the use of temporary foreign workers (First Policy Response, et al. 2020). Such a strategy would address Canada's continuing long-term needs for immigration and the problem of labour force adjustments to high unemployment.

From the vantage point of prospective immigrants to Canada, a World Education Services (WES) survey indicates that COVID-19 has had little negative impact on migration intentions with only 5% of respondents indicating that they were less interested. The economic disruptions of the pandemic are, of course, significant, and employment prospects are more challenging. Nevertheless, 38% believed that the situation in their home country was even more negative. It is important to note that 35% of respondents did indicate that they would consider delaying migration plans due to the impact of COVID-19 (WES 2020). Hence, from the migrant perspective, COVID-19 seemingly has not dampened the interest and intentions to pursue immigration.

A key question concerns how open Canada will be to immigration after the pandemic (Omidvar 2020). There is a danger of a turning inward to a protective position favouring narrow 'Canadian first' policies. Such a position would run against pro-immigration policies that have been the foundation of contemporary Canadian prosperity. Canada's policy of accepting large numbers of immigrants has been judged by most economists and many in the business community to have stimulated economic growth and been a key factor behind the country's positive economic record for the last decade (El-Assal 2020, April 17). An outward looking set of policies for recovery, where immigration remains central, and is considered necessary for future growth, is favoured by many (see for example: Northern Policy Institute 2020; Omidvar 2020; Di Blasi 2020) who think that immigrants will continue to be necessary in post-pandemic Canada to address ongoing skills shortages and a shrinking labour force. An immigration levels debate is likely to be a marker of the post-pandemic world of Canadian public policy.

Shapeshifting into the New Normal: Non-profits, Settlement Agencies, and COVID-19

As institutions, non-profit organizations are extremely important in providing services to the public and they have become even more important in recent decades as the neoliberal state has retreated from social welfare supports and turned to the non-profit sector to do more (Evans, Richmond and Shields 2005). The service providing non-profit sector is heavily reliant on government contract funding, donations, volunteering and a committed if frequently underpaid workforce. In this regard, non-profit organizations tend to be precarious organizations (Shields, et al. 2017; Baines, et al. 2014) that are vulnerable to sudden shocks like a pandemic. The Great Recession of 2008/09, which was far less severe than the current economic downturn, resulted in the closure of many non-profits – a shrinkage of perhaps 5% led by smaller organizations. There was also a more general loss of support that hindered the sector's financial and operating capacity (McCambridge and Dietz 2020; Lowe, Richmond and Shields 2017; Brown, et al. 2013; Morreale 2011; Social Planning Network of Ontario 2009).

A survey conducted by Imagine Canada provides a first look at the impacts of the pandemic on non-profit charities. While there are no direct figures on settlement service organizations, there is data for social service charities of which settlement agencies are a component. Up to the end of April 2020, some 63% of social service agencies reported a decrease in revenues. Thirty-seven percent of these organizations have laid off staff and 52% said that they may face more layoffs. An additional 28% of social service charities have reduced hours of work for staff and 60% said they may need to reduce staff hours more in the future (Imagine Canada 2020, 9, 11). For the overall charitable sector, Imagine Canada estimates that 37,000 full-time and 46,400 part-time workers have already lost their jobs (Imagine Canada 2020, 2).[xxii]

In terms of demand for charitable services, the figures uncover a duality: 42% of social service organizations reported an increase in demand and 33% a decrease (Imagine Canada 2020, 4, 17).[xxiii] During the pandemic, there has in fact been an 'artificial suppression of demand' due to social distancing. The need for these services has not really disappeared and there may well be considerable 'pent-up demand'. Once society opens up, there may well be a strong resurgence in overall demand.

At this point, it is unclear what the full impact of COVID-19 will be on the service providing non-profit sector, it depends in part on the speed and depth of post-pandemic economic recovery. Clearly the effects will be significant and a challenge to the sector's capacity to respond to demand. COVID-19 poses an immediate 'triple threat' of "revenue loss, office closures and service cancellations, and human resource challenges" (The Philanthropist 2020). The pandemic threatens to transform what has been described by a Canadian Senate Committee as a "slowly intensifying crisis" in the non-profit sector into a fully-fledged crisis as funding models and charitable donations are disrupted, and volunteers become less keen to be exposed to health risk (Omidvar and Pearson 2020).[xxiv]

The other structural reality for most non-profits is that they are thinly resourced. Because service organizations rely upon program funding and such things as directed donations, it is difficult for organizations to build up reserve financing for emergencies. The Ontario Non-profit Network has found that nearly half of organizations did not have even three months of financial buffer. As a result, significant numbers of service-providing non-profits are at risk of permanent closure (Harper 2020, June 17).Those that survive face a long period of austere operations.

This is an especially concerning state of affairs since non-profits act as "society's shock absorbers when a crisis hits" (Speer and Dijkema 2020). Non-profit service organizations are needed more than ever to address human needs but non-profit providers are themselves in crisis and may be unable to respond. Due to concerns about non-profits, philanthropy has been identified as having a critical role to play during the coronavirus crisis (Breeze and Ramsbottom 2020). However, the ability of private philanthropy to adequately fill in funding gaps is questionable (Joy and Shields 2018).

The case of food banks is a prime example of the stresses that non-profit actors are facing during COVID-19. Food banks have long been a lifeline for the most marginalized in society. With COVID-19, food banks have become critical resources for an expanding number of the newly unemployed, with marginalized immigrant populations being disproportionally represented in these ranks. Food banks had had a difficult time meeting demand before the pandemic. Now, they have been thrown into a deeper crisis because of rapidly increasing demand and incredibly strained capacity. The central warehouse for the Toronto Daily Bread Food Bank saw over a 50% increase in demand during the pandemic (Fox 2020). Simultaneously, capacity has deteriorated because of reductions in financial and food donations and declining numbers of volunteers who also have to be deployed less 'efficiently' due to social distancing restrictions.

The part of the non-profit sector with perhaps the greatest impact on immigrants is the settlement sector. The service-providing non-profit settlement sector is at the core of Canada's much celebrated settlement and integration approach to immigrant newcomers (Richmond and Shields 2005). Governments fund community-centred organizations to deliver comprehensive settlement-related services to immigrants in local settings. Each year, the federal government devotes more than $1.2 billion to settlement services. Provinces, local authorities and non-profit and private funders also fund settlement programs (Praznik and Shields 2018). The funding that is substantial constitutes part of the broader, if largely unacknowledged, Canadian welfare state.

Much settlement work involves face-to-face counselling, language instruction, workshops, bridging programs, information dissemination, networking, and the like. As community-centred organizations, settlement agencies have been built as hands-on public-facing agencies. A large share of settlement workers are immigrants and direct contact with clients is an important part of the settlement service model (Shields, et al. 2017). The pandemic has profoundly affected the ability of the settlement sector to deliver such services. Providing frontline services places the health of settlement workers and users at risk during COVID-19, so most of the work is not deemed essential for direct delivery. The exception has been a relatively small number of settlement staff who work with newly arrived Government Sponsored Refugees (GARs) who still need face-to-facet contact. In recognition of the value of this work, IRCC has funded a 15% wage premium for such staff during the pandemic (Association of Canadian Studies, et al., May 1).

The pandemic has pushed the settlement sector to shapeshift into distance/virtual modes as public facing offices were forced closed. The challenge of moving to online services has been considerable.[xxv] Compared with small agencies, larger settlement agencies have generally been in a better position to make the shift due to their greater capacity and better access to the technology. It is important to note that settlement organizations are lean operations (Bushell and Shields 2018, Lowe et al. 2017). Since technology is expensive and requires regular upgrading, and funders rarely provide adequate support for such infrastructure, necessary technology investments generally lag demand.

Some non-profit organizations have had to be resilient and have adapted as much as possible to new circumstances by going virtual and offering new programs at a distance (Anderson and

Crockett 2020).[xxvi] Typically larger organizations have moved in this direction. ACCES Employment based in the Greater Toronto Area, for instance, has rapidly adapted by bringing the full breadth of its services on-line (ACCES Employment 2020). ACCES virtualized all its programing during the pandemic, including bridging services, and continues to find employment for skilled clients even in the context of record unemployment.[xxvii]

Refugees, of course, are often the newcomer group in the greatest need due to trauma, lack of English and French language abilities, few financial resources, and limited social capital. The pandemic has left them more isolated at the same time that the necessity for social distancing has made it more difficult to provide settlement services (Smyth 2020). Non-profit organizations have continued to innovate to address refugees' psychological, linguistic and other core needs through the pandemic crisis (CBC News, April 15).

For clients, the shift to online services has gone smoothly for those with digital skills, good access to technology and strong English and French language skills. Many newcomers appreciate the dedication of staff, the adaptability of service delivery, and, in some cases, even prefer online services. However, some newcomers have fallen through the settlement service pandemic cracks. Immigrant clients "feel confused and vulnerable" and report difficulty in accessing information about COVID-19 in their native language (North York Community House, et al. 2020, 8; Camona 2020) even though one of the priorities of IRCC has been for settlement agencies to disseminate accessible information about the supports offered by governments to immigrants (Association of Canadian Studies, et al., May 1).[xxviii]

In their effort to adjust operations and continue to serve newcomers during the pandemic, there is no question that non-profit service provider organizations and their staff have needed government support (Speer and Dijkema 2020). Some non-profit organizations have qualified for the government wage subsidy programs, enabling them to retain staff, and they have also been able to tap into the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) program. These supports have helped to keep operations running for some agencies during the pandemic. Additionally, there is a $350 million Emergency Community Support Fund that the sector can access. OCASI has called this important, but only a "down-payment" (Douglas 2020, May) on what the sector will need to address the social deficits and sector capacity exacerbated by the crisis.

Importantly, government funders of settlement agencies reassured organizations that their funding would not be negatively affected by the pandemic and that they would not be held to performance outcome goals that are no longer achievable because of COVID-19. Continued flexible full government funding of agencies through COVID-19 helps to explain their resilient responses. A key question is whether governments will continue to fund settlement services at high levels or whether, in the wake of the pandemic and in the context of high deficits and economic recession, government funding priorities will shift to other challenges.

It is also the case that going forward there is a need for substantive investments in the infrastructure of the settlement sector. IRCC, other levels of government and non-governmental funders must recognize the need for funding technology, including the regular replacement and upgrading of computers, software, video platforms and the like and funds for training staff in the use of technology (Campana 2020). The future of the settlement sector is one where its digital face will expand.

There is also the need for the settlement sector to share their experiences of operating under COVID-19 including challenges, lessons and best practices. The culture of the sector requires a shift to an ethic of "sharing without fear or competition" (Campana 2020). This means that there is a need to move away from past practices embedded in neoliberal New Public Management that fosters agency competition and practices of lean government funding (Lowe, Richmond and Shields 2017). This will help strengthen the sector's recovery and resilience post-pandemic.

It is also important to recognize the dual role of the non-profit sector in providing both services and advocacy. The advocacy function is critical for the settlement sector because it provides a voice for immigrants and vulnerable migrants. The inequities unveiled by COVID-19 are being articulated by settlement agencies promoting policy and programing reforms and supports. Debbie Douglas, the Executive Director of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) has emphasized the critical place of advocacy in the sector's response to the pandemic (Douglas 2020, April; Douglas 2020, May). As the settlement sector shapeshifts to the 'new normal' in the post-COVID-19 world there will be a struggle to define that reality. A progressive policy agenda will only be realized through a strong advocacy by the sector.

Falling Through the COVID-19 Support Cracks

While Canadian institutions have aggressively responded to COVID-19, there remain important gaps. It has become clear that migrant populations are very vulnerable in this regard. For example, more recent immigrants often fail to meet all of the targeted criteria for COVID-19 assistance programs like the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) (Jingco 2020). As reported earlier an estimated half a million immigrants have likely failed to qualify for COVID-19 related protective measures. The lack of universal coverage, that is a prime feature of these programs, like so much of the Canadian welfare state, means that many of the most vulnerable remain uncovered. So-called non-permanent Canadian residents like temporary foreign workers, international students, and irregular migrants are generally excluded from, or find it difficult to meet all the criteria for, supports. It is clear that such migrant populations are especially vulnerable during the pandemic and supports need to move beyond citizens and permanent residents.

There are questions as to what is happening to existing temporary workers, many of whom will have been pushed out of work because of businesses closures. Those in so-called low-skill level jobs are tied to a single employer and lack labour mobility under rules governing their employment. These temporary workers' mobility is further limited because of current restrictions on

international travel that prevent them from returning to their home countries. These workers are generally not covered under existing COVID-19 or social support programs. The lack of government support raises important questions regarding how they are able to support themselves financially, and gain access to health and other social supports.[xxix]

Alternative social welfare policies that could respond in a more robust manner to crises have also garnered more attention. In particular, the adoption of universal basic income has come to the fore (Eggleton and Segal 2020; John Harris 2020). A universal basic income automatically entitles citizens/residents to a basic income. It reduces the need for a complex patchwork of supports like unemployment insurance, social assistance and special emergency measures such as CERB. There are questions with the guaranteed basic income (will it be a living or a poverty wage) and will all Canadian residents be covered, including groups like international students and other precarious migrants, or will it be restricted only to citizens and permanent residents. These questions will need to be addressed before moving forward with such reform.[xxx]

Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine* (2007) is relevant here. She explains how economic crises have been used in the past to drive forward neoliberal austerity 'reforms'. The current COVID-19 crisis, however, has the possibility to be a driver of more progressive-based reforms like the universal basic income (Shanahan and Smith 2020). Clearly, COVID-19 has opened up a lively policy discussion about the need for reform of social security policies with the guaranteed annual income among the most debated proposal.

B) COVID-19 and the Economic, Social and Political Impacts

The COVID-19 Economic Crisis: Immigrant Job Loss and the Scarring Impacts

Economies around the globe have felt the negative impacts of the pandemic with steep declines in growth and massive surges in unemployment and state debt as revenues decline and expenditures to address COVID-19 explode.[xxxi] This extensive economic downturn has come to be labeled the 'Coronavirus Recession' and by the IMF 'The Great Lockdown' (International Monetary Fund 2020).

Data indicate Canada's economy is on par with other G7 countries hit hard by the pandemic. In March 2020, the GDP dropped by 7.2%, the steepest decline since such data started to be collected in 1961. Early April numbers suggest a further 11% GDP decline (Evans 2020, May 29). Unemployment numbers have also sharply risen. In March and April 2020 some 5.5 million in Canada lost their jobs or had significant reductions in their work hours. The official unemployment rate as of April stood at 13%. This is a far steeper economic decline than occurred during the 'Great Recession' of 2008/09 and in fact on many levels parallel indicators in the 1930s 'Great Depression (Evans 2020, May 29). The pandemic-induced economic crisis happened in the context of solid

economic growth, a strong stock market, and the rapid intervention of the state to support businesses and individuals impacted by the crisis (Cohan 2020; Fishback 2020).

The May job numbers in both the U.S. and Canada showed some rebound as the economies began to slowly open (Betsy Klein 2020; Evans 2020, June 5). In Canada, some 290,000 jobs were added to the labour market, representing about a 10% bounce back from the initial COVID-19 hit (Evans 2020, June 5), about the same level of bounce back as in the U.S. (Betsy Klien 2020). This suggests that a 1930s depression may have been averted, but the expectations are still for only gradual economic improvements and the overall economic prognosis is worse than the 2008/09 recession. The severity of the downturn is evident when we combine official unemployment with those who want more work or have stopped looking for work because of lack of jobs. In May 2020, greater than one-third (34.8%) of the potential labour force in Canada was fully or partially out of work. This figure was down slightly from April (36.6%) but significantly higher than the 11.9% in February 2020 (Statistics Canada 2020, June 5).

The pandemic is projected to have long-term negative impacts on many industries like tourism, travel and hospitality, but hope remains for a staged overall resilient recovery after the health emergency lifts (Mintz 2020). The reality of this projection remains to be seen, but there will certainly be some deep economic scarring left by the economic shock of the pandemic. Certainly, the pandemic has uncovered long standing socio-economic inequalities and other vulnerabilities, including those of immigrants.

Economic crises do not affect all parts of the labour force the same. The 2008/09 recession statistics show that in the OECD immigrants, and in particular more recent immigrants, were disproportionally impacted by job loss (Barrass and Shields 2017, 196). In Canada, immigrants with 5 years or less residency made up 21.6% of job losses even though they constituted only 3.1% of the workforce (Rosher et al. 2012, 45). Immigrants with 5 to 10 years of residency were also hard hit by unemployment. While the detailed breakdown of unemployment numbers for the pandemic are not fully available, we know that visible minorities and immigrants have been highly vulnerable to layoff and high unemployment levels, especially more recent immigrants (Hou, Frank and Schimmele 2020; Statistics Canada 2020, June 5; Angus Reid Institute 2020; Jedwab 2020a; 2020b; UNODC 2020).[xxxii]

There is danger that lengthy spells of unemployment, especially for those new to the labour market, can have long-term 'scarring effects' on future employment prospects including the quality of jobs 'available' to such workers (Arulampalam 2001). Many employers view long-spells of unemployment or under-employment as a deskilling process. A 'pandemic recession' threatens to create such circumstances (Fisher and Bubala 2020). This situation would constitute a significant waste of human capital and hinder economic recovery.

Immigrants, “Essential” Low Paid Work, and Workplace Health Dangers during COVID-19

It is important to note that immigrant workers are often employed in dangerous work, especially in the context of COVID-19 and they frequently work in jobs that cannot be done from home. For example, a high proportion of immigrant workers are employed in long-term care and frontline health care, as cleaners, taxi drivers, transport and factory workers (Bouka and Bouka 2020). Many of the workers only receive minimum wage.

In Canada, it is the lowest paid who have been most negatively affected by COVID-19. Some 50% of those who have become unemployed or lost most of their paid work hours in March and April 2020 earned $16 or less an hour. Many of these workers may be compelled to make an unenviable choice of returning to workplaces that fail to provide adequate protection against COVID-19 or lose access to the Canada Emergency Relief Benefit (CERB) because they ‘chose’ to leave their jobs. Many workers in meat packing plants are already facing this situation (Aaron 2020).

The concern for the health impacts of COVID-19 appears to be reflected in immigrant’s attitudes to health risks. Accordingly, “in regard to health, for example, almost half of immigrants (49%) reported that they were ‘very’ or ‘extremely’ concerned about their own health, compared with one-third (33%) of the Canadian-born” (LaRochelle-Côé and Uppal 2020).

Jobs in meat processing plants illustrate the threat to a broader grouping of workers who work in jobs that involve close human contact. The workforce in these plants is primarily made-up of immigrant workers, many recruited under Provincial Nominee Programs (PNPs). The Cargill meat packing plant in High River Alberta was the site of the largest outbreak of COVID-19 in North America with 921 confirmed cases (Dryden 2020).[xxxiii] Worker protection in these facilities has been deemed secondary to keeping operations going. There have been widespread reports of inadequate protective measures, protective equipment and testing as well as unwell workers being compelled to return to work once their sick leave was used up (Cassidy 2020; CBC News, May 4; Ebbs 2020). The infection of these workers is of course not restricted to the plants but spreads into the community.[xxxiv]

Jobs in health, long-term care and meat packing all carry high risk of COVID-19 infections. . There are now calls to recognize such work as essential and provide better working conditions, health and safety protections, sick pay and ‘living wages’ (Mojtehedzadeh, March 24 2020; Subramaniam 2020).[xxxv]

The pandemic has certainly opened debate about what is “essential work”, and how it is valued and rewarded. A redefinition of what is skilled and essential work is necessary. Hence, on the public policy front there has been increased pressure to raise minimum wages. Prime Minister Justice Trudeau publicly acknowledged the unequal burden that COVID-19 has placed on some on May 8 when he stated:

> I think this is one of the first recessions we've ever seen that has so hard hit vulnerable workers in the service sector, particularly women and new Canadians and young people.
>
> That's why, as a society, not only do we need to do what we are doing in the short term to give extra supports to vulnerable people, but we need to make sure that as we move forward … we think very, very carefully about how important the work that is being done by women and vulnerable Canadians is, and how we need to make sure we're better supporting them (Wherry 2020, May 10).

The public policy of progressive reform has been placed clearly on the public agenda post-pandemic.

Under-utilization of Foreign Trained Medical Professionals and Other Health Workers: The Dampening of Medical Response Resilience

Many international medically trained professionals came forward during the pandemic to help address healthcare shortages, to be part of a solution, and to increase the Canadian health system's resilience during COVID-19. Ontario's College of Physicians and Surgeons took the first hesitant steps in this direction by allowing internationally trained doctors who had passed their exams to work under restrictions under 30-day temporary licences (Brockbank 2020). Only a small number of foreign-trained doctors, however, have qualified.

Ontario's Health Workforce Matching Portal is another initiative designed to connect healthcare providers, including internationally trained professionals, with health employers. A press release for the portal noted that the goal was to "efficiently match the availability and skill sets of frontline health care workers to the employers in need of assistance to perform a variety of public health functions, such as case and contact management" (Canadian Immigrant 2020, April 13). There has been an ongoing shortage of health workers, especially lower paid workers in long-term care homes. In Ontario and Quebec there have been persistent public calls inviting applications for such work. The extent of the need, the conditions of work and the inherent health risks have made successful recruitment challenging.[xxxvi]

As noted in Section One, in Quebec, many asylum seekers with very insecure status have been employed on the frontlines of healthcare during the pandemic, especially in long-term care. They are commonly employed by temporary help agencies that are heavily utilized in the long-term care industry (Stevenson and Shingler 2020, May 8). Temporary help agencies have been identified as contributing to the rapid spread of the virus among both workers and care residents as workers have moved regularly between facilities (Mojtehedzadeh 2020, April 19). It remains a question whether such migrants with insecure status will be granted the right to stay in Canada because of their willingness to contribute to such essential and dangerous work in a time of crisis. Numerous studies and experts have identified the challenges of unsafe conditions and exploited healthcare

workers. Such studies have outlined changes that are needed to this industry in the interest of public health and worker justice (see: Armstrong et al. 2020; Tungohan 2020).

Wealthy OECD countries for many years have been employing a ‘global health workforce’. Large percentages of health employees in rich countries are migrants trained elsewhere.[xxxvii] “In Canada, in 2018, 8.5 percent of nurses and 26.4 percent of physicians were internationally educated” (Walton-Roberts 2020, 4). We depend heavily on these professionals and there remains considerable underutilization of such migrants and a systematic undervaluing of their credentials. This situation hinders resilient responses to care needs, especially in a time of crisis.

The Unequal Burden of Early Openings of Economies

The push to reopen national and regional economies in many countries has been promoted by powerful political and business interests who have prioritized the immediate economic costs of the pandemic over health concerns. Opening economies before infection rates are safely under control will increase exposure for the most vulnerable. This is especially the case when workers who survive pay cheque to pay cheque are forced to choose between their health and safety and returning to a workplace where physical distancing and other safety measures are difficult to maintain. In this regard, the pandemic is certainly not the great leveler. Rather societal structural inequalities are built into the patterns of the spread of COVID-19. Tankersley has noted that premature reopening will create “two major groups along socio-economic lines: one that has the power to control its exposure to the coronavirus outbreak and another that is forced to choose between potential sickness or financial devastation” (2020, A1).

Many U.S. states have chosen very early openings urged on by President Trump and, not surprisingly, this resulted in surges in COIVID-19 outbreaks. Support for early openings was not driven by scientific evidence but by political calculation and ideology. In the U.S. it has been Republican states supported by Trump that have led the way in this direction. Linked to early openings has been staunch support for this position in some parts of the U.S. population. The leadership of this movement has been linked to right wing extremist groups. They have reacted strongly against measures designed to limit activities (partial economy closures), enforcing social distancing and practices like face mask wearing (Kane 2020). Such resistance has been seen in numerous large ‘open the economy’ demonstrations, where social distancing is not practiced and many demonstrators carry weapons and seek to intimidate their opposition. In everyday practice many supporters of this position have been flouting social distancing rules and refusing to wear facemasks even in establishments that are requiring such rules. This has led to many confrontations and law-breaking actions. This position is justified on the grounds of a defence of notions of hyper-individual rights and freedoms, freedom of movement, rejection of a strong role for government in society, and support for a ‘free’ economy over public health (Shribman 2020). Of course, such developments are also closely tied to acts of Coronaracism. This movement in the U.S. is racially homogenous and is centred in elements of the white population and politically supportive of Trump

who has encouraged such resistance and at his own campaign rallies has resisted facemask wearing and social distancing.

This phenomenon is part of a new 'culture war' centred on the handling of the pandemic (Noor 2020) which feeds on anti-migrant and American first sentiments. These developments in the U.S. follow a pattern of other right-wing populist governments and movements in places like Brazil and some eastern European countries. It starkly contrasts with anti-racist protests and rioting that developed in reaction to the killing by police of an unarmed black man, George Floyd, in Minneapolis (Eligon, Futrber and Robertson 2020), but also in the context in which black Americans and other minorities are dying of COVID-19 at three or more times the rate of white Americans (Kendi 2020). While the pandemic has brought starkly into light the "inequality crisis", the violence of police authorities has pushed it over the edge into mass public outrage (Healy and Searcey 2020, June 6-7, 1, 6). Of course, Trump has been very condemning of these demonstrations and has weaponized these protests by calling for massive police and military force to repress this form of resistance.

In Canada, the outcry and individual acts of resistance to government actions to combat COVID-19 have been on a relatively small scale and have even been denounced by right-of-centre government leaders like Ontario's Doug Ford (Rocca 2020). It is the case, however, that racist acts linked to COVID-19 have been rising in Canada (Rowe 2020).[xxxviii].

Politicians in Canada have been largely resistant to overtly politicizing the response to COVID-19. Canadian governments to date have been following more closely an evidence-informed approach to decision-making[xxxix] around the timing of reopening. Quebec, the province most affected by coronavirus, has been more aggressive in reopening than Ontario, but all Canadian jurisdictions have been easing the tight restrictions imposed in March 2020.

The Geography of COVID-19: The Threat to Immigrant Communities

There is a distinct geography to COVID-19 that is linked to vulnerable populations. A recent Harvard University research study documented higher coronavirus death rates in communities with high rates of poverty, overcrowded housing, and large numbers of racial/ethnic minorities (Ryan 2020). Canadian studies have likewise found that low-income populations living in overcrowded housing are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. In Canada, many of these populations are heavily immigrant (Contenta 2020, A3). ICES (a non-profit organization formerly known as the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences) matched socio-economic demographic data with testing results for COVID-19 in the Toronto area. It found significantly higher numbers of positive test scores for those who reside "in neighbourhoods characterized by precarious housing, lower income status and a greater concentration of immigrants" (Wallace and Moon 2020, A1). Toronto data that linked infection rates to postal code confirmed that by far the highest rates of infection were found in neighborhoods in the northeast and northwest of the city that have high number of immigrants

(CBC 2020, May 27). The key factor for higher rates of infection is not being an immigrant, but the fact that immigrants are much more likely to be living in overcrowded housing, be low income and have employment that places them in circumstances where they are not able to socially distance (Choi et al. 2020, 6-7). The study also found that people in these neighbourhoods were also less likely to be tested for COVID-19 but when tested, they are more likely to be positive (Wallace and Moon 2020, A1, A8).

Quebec, and in particular Montreal, has become the epicentre for the virus in Canada with those who are the most marginalized in crowded housing having the highest infection and mortality rates. In neighborhoods like Montréal-Nord, asylum seekers have been particularly affected by COVID-19 (Lindeman 2020; Rocha, Shingler and Montpetit. 2020). In such Montreal neighbourhoods about half of the population is visible minority and some 40% is immigrant (Shingler and Stevenson 2020, May 8).[xl]

The Social Determinants of COVID-19: Pandemic Discrimination

> The COVID-19 crisis is not only a health crisis. It is a mirror of our underlying economic and social fabric. It is refracting back to us all the forms of economic and social inequality that we have always had. And how those inequalities are becoming amplified. To the extent that migration is crucial to our economy and our labour market, the current migration pandemic crisis is also a broader challenge for … society, for which pragmatic, human, and community-minded responses are urgently needed (Boucher 2020).

In fact, it is the "people who face racism, sexism and inequality are more likely to get sick. Taking care of each other starts with understanding this" (Solnit 2020). The unequal impact of COVID-19 is a function of race, ethnicity and immigration status (Platt and Warwick 2020; Nasser 2020; APM Research Lab Staff 2020; Johnson 2020; Reich 2020).[xli] In fact, there is a strong positive association between race, ethnicity and the pandemic (Choitiner 2020). A study in England and Wales found that ethnicity and race were closely associated with COVID-19 morbidity. Blacks were four time more likely than whites to die from COVID-19. The researchers suspect the kinds of occupations that ethnic minorities and racialized people occupy may be a primary factor behind the differences (Booth and Barr 2020).

The fight against COVID-19 is often cast as a war but it is a war in which the casualties have been disproportionately visible minorities, immigrants and working-class people on the frontlines (Cassidy 2020). Rinaldo Walcott from Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto notes that the inequalities made evident by the pandemic lay bare the fundamental limitations of multiculturalism and diversity in Western society (MLC 2020) and directs our attention to the need to bring a human rights (Guterres 20202) and social justice lens to this matter.

Consideration must be given as to why Canada and other jurisdictions do not collect race-based data given that we know that COVID-19 is having significant differential effects of population groups (Nasser 2020; Bouka and Bouka 2020). This has led to increased demands for more systematic and comprehensive measures to collect race and ethnic based data (Carpenter 2020; Osman 2020; Tungohan 2020; Abboud 2020).In part, some information on this issue is emerging from new surveys from the Association for Canadian Studies-Metropolis (2020, April 9) and Statistics Canada (2020, April 6). Toronto also released COVID-19 infection rates by postal code, a response which was resisted by the province. In the City of Toronto, these data identify geographical areas of high infection rates, and many of these areas are economically disadvantaged and more likely to be home to immigrant and racialized groups (CBC News, May 27).

Immigration status is also having an important impact on access to supports during the pandemic. In Canada, a clear example is the case of migrants who lack full status. Accessing services could reveal their lack of legal status and result in detention and eventual deportation. This situation makes them especially vulnerable and more likely to resist getting necessary supports including those related to health. It is even affecting their ability to exercise their civil rights to protest in events like Black Lives Matter because if they are arrested during a protest they risk being handed to immigration enforcement officials (Sangal 2020). Organizations like the Migrant Rights Network (nd) have argued strongly that all migrants, including those who lack status need to have safe access to health care, COVID-19 testing, labour rights and other such protection. Concerns for especially vulnerable migrants have increased considerably during the pandemic (Meyer 2020).

The Politics of COVID-19: Solidarity, Politicization and Right-Wing Populism

The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in numerous responses related to immigration and migration, some negative and some of them quite positive (CERC 2020, May 13). Catherine Xhardez, a Postdoctoral Fellow at Concordia University asks important questions in this regard: “[C]an the pandemic affect the ways we think about immigration in ‘western’ countries? … [C]an it make us feel more empathy and solidarity, acknowledging vulnerability and interdependence, and building more resilience than before?” (2020).

Along with cooperation and nonpartisan approaches to respond to the pandemic, there are also examples of how the crisis has been turned more negatively partisan and divisive. A clear example is the Trump administration in the U.S., whose response to the crisis has marginalized vulnerable groups. Sebastien Goupil, Secretary-General of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO has observed:

> COVID-19 is already having a profound effect on societies around the world; there are new forms of connectedness, but also new forms of disinformation, isolation and discrimination. It is more essential than ever that sound research on social impacts be

widely shared to inform policy and decision-making at all levels of government (Association for Canadian Studies 2020, April 9; also see Appendix 2).

Widespread stigmatization and scapegoating of Asians has occurred in the U.S. and Canada, and false claims that migrants and migration are root causes of the pandemic have been perpetuated. The targeting of migrants and racial and ethnic minorities during the pandemic has come to be labelled CoronaRacism (IMO 2020, Snapshot #33) and it plays into the agenda of right wing populist political movements and governments. For such movements "the pandemic has been weaponized to spread anti-migrant narratives and call for increased immigration control and reduction of migrants' rights" (Guadagno 2020, 12) Blaming the Chinese (Zeidler 2020), migrants and other vulnerable populations is also a convenient way to shift the blame and distract from some governments' mismanagement of the pandemic. CoronaRacism has become the politics of distraction, hate and discrimination. Such attacks discourage immigrants/migrants from being tested and seeking medical assistance when needed (Guadagno 2020, 11), placing them at risk and hindering efforts to limit community spread. This reminds us that solidaristic approaches are not only based on respecting human rights but also are the foundation for good health policy in combating the pandemic. As Lorenzo Guadagno of the IMO notes: "… societies that cannot mitigate the economic, social and psychological impacts of the outbreak and related response measures on all communities will be less able to recover effectively and will likely face heavier direct and indirect long-term consequences" (2020, 3).

The question of 'what happens next?' (CERC 2020, May 13) is an important one with possible positive and negative dimensions. Too much of the discourse around COVID-19 and migrants has been negative. There is an opportunity to flip the negative narrative (CERC 2020, May 13). Approaches rooted in social solidarity promote human rights and are the foundation for good health policy in combating the pandemic. Small acts of solidarity are not just symbolically important; they can help to build deeper support and engagement into the future. A case in point has been the regular nightly display of the banging of pots and pans in support of frontline workers, many of whom are foreign-born and poorly paid. In future rights or wage struggles, this favourable relationship can be of significant strategic value. Acts of solidarity are also evident in the Black Lives Matter protests around the globe where whites and other non-black people in large numbers are marching to show their support in opposition to racial injustice (Parker, Menasce and Anderson 2020; Patton 2020) even in the context of the COVID-19 threat.

In some countries where right-wing populist movements have arisen, the pandemic has actually worked to expose the limitations of leaders and ideas behind these movements, and led to a growing confidence in scientific authority. This has been the case, for example, in Italy and Germany (Kendall-Taylor and Nietsche 2020; Lassa and Booth 2020). In other countries right-wing governments have used the crisis to impose more authoritarian measures in order to consolidate their power, as the cases of Hungary, Poland and Brazil suggest (Kakissis 2020; Andriescu 2020). Trump, of course, has been widely accused of using the corona crisis to push forward his own 'authoritarian turn' (Acemoglu 2020). But, as in the example of Brazil and the

U.S., the rise of considerable popular opposition threatens the authority of such right-wing leaders (Zabala 2020). Hence, the pattern of right-wing populism is mixed and volatile (Sorge 2020).

In the U.S.

> … one lesson of the pandemic is clear: America's deep and brutal fault lines – of race, partisanship, gender, poverty and misinformation – rendered the country ill-prepared to meet the challenges of this disease. The ravages of Covid-19 have revealed the deep cracks in the glittering facade of the richest and most powerful nation on Earth (Pilkington 2020).

The mass rioting in late May and June against racism in the U.S. is a clear demonstration of this (Keenan 2020). There are also intensified calls well beyond the U.S., including Canada, to recognize and declare racism and to treat it as a public crisis with strong demands for action (Allen and Yang 2020, A1, A10).

Conclusion: Migration, Resilience and COVID-19

Social resilience speaks to the ways that social structures and institutions support society to overcome significant obstacles and crises by drawing on collective social resources. In Canada, on the domestic front, the response by public authorities to the pandemic has been a strong marshalling of a large array of programs and the deployment of existing institutions to support different segments of the population and economy, health systems, and local governments under financial strain. Along with giving support to the public to enhance their own resilience to navigate COVID-19, the response has demonstrated the resilience of our health and socio-economic institutions and our political system more generally. Adoption of evidence-informed pragmatic policy approaches is evident. However, the impacts of COVID-19 are uneven, as is access to protections and benefits especially among immigrants and migrants whose status is temporary or irregular. Migrants and immigrants face greater risks of COVID-19 because of the types of jobs they perform and the neighbourhoods and housing in which they live. Migrants and immigrants confront the unequal burden of COVID-19, clearly demonstrating their more precarious position within Canada. The lived reality is that "not everyone gets to be safe" (Wherry 2020, June 13).

In terms of borders and the international movement of migrants, Canadian actions have been problematic. The closing of borders has severely curbed international travel and other population movements, including refugee asylum seeking. This situation has virtually halted the landing of immigrants, refugees and international students in Canada. The question of the rights of the most vulnerable – refugees and asylum seekers – which has been downgraded in this pandemic, needs to be elevated and built into resilient migration policies and emergency responses grounded in social justice. The case of temporary farm workers also reveals the dependence of advanced economies, like Canada, on cheap temporary foreign labour. The vulnerability of these farm

workers to COVID-19 once in Canada indicates that their working conditions and those of all temporary workers need to be adequately addressed.

Border closing, with notable exceptions made for what have been deemed 'essential workers' has been justified as a protection against virus spread. Restrictions, however, have gone much further, in many cases being xenophobic nationalist reactions to 'the dangerous other' with argument's for further securitization of migration. This response is connected to governments that call for limited neoliberal forms of resilience along and with right-wing populist positions that promote oppositional narratives that harm immigrants and other vulnerable populations. It calls for sacrifice in the pursuit of "possessive individualism" (McPherson 1961), ignoring differential impacts of COVID-19, and without offering the rewards of solidarity, sharing and mutual accomplishment in the context of struggle. Neoliberalism seeks to forge paths forward by dividing and polarizing. In fact, such governments' own shortcomings are projected on to others in blame- shifting exercises. The heavy focus on borders pursued by some during this pandemic is designed to shift attention away from other areas where government resources fall short in addressing COVID-19 and the post-pandemic rebuilding.

Even for governments that have pursued proactive and supportive approaches to COVID-19, questions persist about whether in the post-pandemic period there will be a return to austerity and more neoliberal resilience strategies, as happened after the 2008-09 recession. Alternatively, does this moment represent a progressive opening with a more general embrace of social resilience and a commitment to addressing precarity and structural inequities? Social resilience responses from government will require an activist state. The pandemic has caused widespread economic dislocation that will be not be quickly or easily reversed. Times of crisis can open policy windows that provide opportunities for sweeping structural reforms.

More specifically with respect to migration Di Blasi aptly notes:

> … governments and civil-society players need to coalesce around collective campaigns to prevent the spread of false and misleading narratives about migrants, promoting instead the role third-country nationals are playing in societies and communities in responding to the crisis. The last thing the world can afford right now is a recrudescence of the xenophobic and right-wing narratives that will stifle recovery and deepen the recession (Di Blasi 2020).

Additionally:

> … authorities need to invest in designing 'inclusive recovery plans', which incorporate dedicated investments to cater for the most vulnerable in society, reduce inequalities and allow migrants to play an active role in the emergence from the crisis. Portugal and Italy are leading the way by promoting innovative regularisation opportunities for irregular migrants who live at the margins of society and the economy (Di Blasi 2020).

There will be struggle regarding the shape the future takes. It is important that migrant rights groups, settlement agencies and their umbrella support organizations, and other progressive forces, engage in vigorous public advocacy for policies and programs that support open multicultural societies, anti-racism, protection of the most vulnerable migrants, and robust social programs that address deep structural inequality. The burden of risk must be shifted away from the individual, and through public policy and institutions, placed more squarely within the collective. These are social resilience centred responses grounded in solidarity.

The pandemic has been 'the Great Disrupter' economically, socially, politically, geographically, and certainly in terms of population health. In the words of the World Economic Forum, COVID-19 constitutes "a seismic geopolitical event that will transform migration and mobility systems globally" (2020). The question remains as to what shape this change will take. With the aid of evidence-informed advocacy and grassroots popular support, these changes can be shaped in progressive directions.

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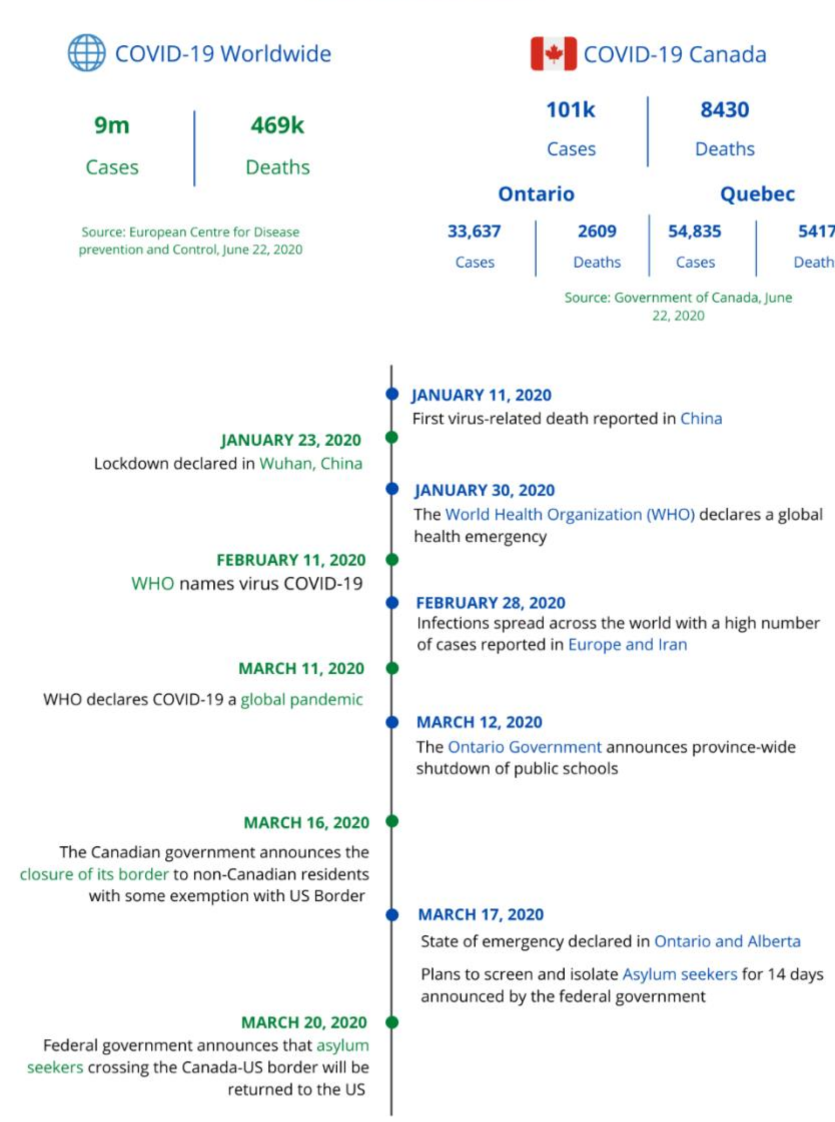
Appendix: Timeline
COVID-19
(January 11-June 22, 2020)
COVID-19 Worldwide
9m
Cases
469k
Deaths
Source: European Centre for Disease prevention and Control, June 22, 2020
COVID-19 Canada
101k
Cases
8430
Deaths
Ontario
33,637
Cases
2609
Deaths
Quebec
54,835
Cases
5417
Deaths
Source: Government of Canada, June 22, 2020
JANUARY 11, 2020
First virus-related death reported in China
JANUARY 23, 2020
Lockdown declared in Wuhan, China
JANUARY 30, 2020
The World Health Organization (WHO) declares a global health emergency
FEBRUARY 11, 2020
WHO names virus COVID-19
FEBRUARY 28, 2020
Infections spread across the world with a high number of cases reported in Europe and Iran
MARCH 11, 2020
WHO declares COVID-19 a global pandemic
MARCH 12, 2020
The Ontario Government announces province-wide shutdown of public schools
MARCH 16, 2020
The Canadian government announces the closure of its border to non-Canadian residents with some exemption with US Border
MARCH 17, 2020
State of emergency declared in Ontario and Alberta
Plans to screen and isolate Asylum seekers for 14 days announced by the federal government
MARCH 20, 2020
Federal government announces that asylum seekers crossing the Canada-US border will be returned to the US

MARCH 21, 2020

Closure of the Canada-US border to all non-essential travel

Temporary foreign workers including migrant farm labourers are given travel exemptions

MARCH 22, 2020

Quebec announces closure of all non-essential businesses

MARCH 23, 2020

Federal government passes the Emergency Aid Bill

14 day quarantine becomes mandatory for all returning Canadians

MARCH 27, 2020

Quebec declares state of emergency

APRIL 2, 2020

More than one million COVID-19 cases confirmed globally

APRIL 5, 2020

Federal government announces more financial aid for Canadians

MAY 6, 2020

Ontario emergency orders extended to May 19 as cases surpass 19,598

Quebec extends the closure of non-essential businesses and schools to May 25 as cases surpass 36,150

MAY 9, 2020

Ontario re-opens select businesses and lifts restrictions on walking, biking, hiking

MAY 21, 2020

Number of worldwide COVID-19 cases reach five million

MAY 27, 2020

Ontario extends state of emergency to June 9, health services re-open

COVID-19 cases reach 100,000 in the U.S.

JUNE 1, 2020

Quebec re-opens businesses, daycares, private health services

JUNE 15, 2020

Ontario regions except for Peel, Toronto and Windsor-Essex commence Phase 2 of re-opening

JUNE 17, 2020

Ontario emergency orders extended to June 30

JUNE 22, 2020

Quebec re-opens gyms, indoor pools, houses of worship

Appendix 2

Research & Knowledge Dissemination: A Partial Inventory

Significantly, numerous institutions are actively engaged in research and knowledge dissemination concerning COVID-19 and its influence on migration and immigrant populations. Some of the initiatives have risen explicitly in response to the pandemic. These institutions include academic establishments, think tanks, research bodies, media, non-profit and other organizations. They are both Canadian-based and international, and are responding to the need for research and information sharing on this issue. This is not a complete list of institutions but a sampling. A good example is the development of the COVID-19 Social Impacts Network which "is a multidisciplinary group of some of the country's leading experts to help identify key issues, indicators and socio-demographics to generate evidence-based responses that address the social and economic dimensions of the COVID-19 crisis in Canada" (Association for Canadian Studies-Metropolis 2020, April 9). Its discussions include examining the impact on immigrants. Additionally, Statistics Canada has focused its statistical resources and analysis "to provide an accurate picture of what is happening in Canada, empowering governments, businesses and Canadians alike with the information they need to respond to, and recover from, this pandemic" (Statistics Canada 2020, April 6). This includes statistical tables, figures, dashboards, and such, related to the economic and social impacts of Covid-19. There is a particular need for empirically based evidence on how COVID-19 is affecting immigrants and racialized populations. Given the lack of official data sources that generally track this dimension it is important that other ways of surveying to gather such information is undertaken and Stats Can and the COVID-19 Social Impacts Network has helped to fill the gap. This data will help power evidence-driven policy responses that are able to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on various populations in Canada.

"First Policy Response" is a university-linked initiative. It is a collaboration between the Ryerson Leadership Lab, the Brookfield Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and Matthew Mendelsohn, a well-known and respected public policy expert. The goal of First Policy Response:

> … is to bring the Canadian policy community together to highlight the best economic and social policy ideas to keep us afloat and together. Our focus will be on those ideas that can get Canadians through the immediate crisis and prepare us for a sustainable and equitable recovery (http://policyresponse.ca/about/).

Mendelsohn noted the importance of coming "together as a policy community to outline economic and social policy responses in real time" (The Philanthropist 2020).

The Canada Excellence Research Chair (CERC) in Migration and Integration, located at Ryerson University, as part of its wider migration research agenda, has created a program of webinars and blogs called "Pandemic Borders" that "investigate the extraordinary challenges that migrant populations are facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic" (CERC nd). In Washington D.C. the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) produces important regular research reports on the pandemic

and migration (https://www.migrationpolicy.org/). At the international level there have been numerous migration research centres that have created specific resources and on-line forums on the crisis and its impacts on migrants and migration. An excellent example is the United Nations' agency the International Organization for Migration (IOM) that has been an important source of research and information. Their COVID-19 Analytical Snapshot series is particularly informative two-page summaries and guides to topics on COVID-19 and migration in English, French and Spanish (https://www.iom.int/migration-research/covid-19-analytical-snapshot). Additionally, the IMO's journal for policymakers, *Migration Policy Practice* April-June 2020 edition devoted a special edition on COVID-19 challenges for policy and programing (https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mpp-41.pdf).

Organizations like the Ontario Non-profit Network (ONN) has been engaged in providing key resources and information supporting non-profit organizations through the crisis (ONN 2020, April 24). Umbrella organizations in the settlement sector, like the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) and Quebec's Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes (TCRI), have played an essential role in representing settlement organizations, being one of their key information sources and their voice with the public and policymakers during the pandemic. Additionally, the media outlet the *Canadian Immigrant* provides regular news stories and podcasts to address questions about immigration during the pandemic (2020, April 24). It has a popular reach into the immigrant community.

If we are to develop public understanding about the uneven effects of COVID-19 on immigrants and migrants' contributions to 'essential service' work during the pandemic, combat anti-immigrant sentiment, and develop evidence-based resilient responses, then research and its dissemination/mobilization at all levels will be vital. These institutional responses, and others, are playing a key role in this regard.

End Notes

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[i] Among thes targets were 600 refugees who were or are at risk of being forced into slavery in Libya (Blanchfield and Cook 2019; Omstead 2020). The federal government had also pledged to resettle an additional 100 refugees who were removed from Libyan detention centres to Niger (Blanchfield and Cook 2019). In response to the suspension of resettlement, the office of the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Marco Mendocino stated that they "will work with partners to continue to resettle refugees from Niger and Libya once conditions allow" (Omstead 2020). To date, half of those refugees have been resettled while 200 remain in detention centres in Libya where conditions are reported to be "extremely inhumane" (Omstead 2020).

[ii] In the Moria Camp, Greece, 1,300 people share one water tap, making regular hand washing extremely difficult (Medicins Sans Frontiers 2020). In Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, a camp that hosts 1 million refugees, the first COVID-19 related death has been reported and doctors warn that there is "absolutely no way to limit the spread of COVID-19" (CTV 2020; Sevunts 2020; Rieger 2020; Vanderklippe, et al. 2020).

[iii] It is estimated that 30,000 asylum seekers have not had their refugee claims heard by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, meaning that their status remains in limbo (Stevenson and Shingler 2020).

[iv] Keller and Wagner note:

"Over 37,000 immigrants are currently detained by Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) in more than 130 facilities across the USA. As understandable fear of the coronavirus disease … (COVID-19) pandemic intensifies in the USA, so too does the imminent danger ICE prisons pose not only to the vulnerable populations detained within their walls but to the nation's public health. Given the urgent need to control the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), ICE should release all detained immigrants posing no threat to public safety.

"Overcrowding, poor sanitation, inadequate healthcare, and difficulty containing contagious diseases are well documented in ICE's immigration detention system. Most facilities are run by private prisons or county jails through lucrative ICE subcontracts. Distancing and other necessary measures to prevent SARS-CoV-2 from spreading are not possible in immigrant prisons. These congregate detention facilities pose a great contagion risk: already, several staff at different immigrant detention centres have tested positive for COVID-19 and detainee infections are being reported as well" (2020).

[v] Martin Chulov of *The Guardian* comments:

"Crammed into work camps, stood down from their jobs, facing high rates of infection and with no way home, hundreds of thousands of migrant workers are bearing the brunt of the coronavirus pandemic in the Middle East, migrant advocates and diplomats say.

"Migrant workers' risk of exposure to Covid-19 is so high, rights groups say, that host countries need to offer the same protections granted to their citizens or face the threat of a rampant outbreak that proves ever more difficult to contain" (2020).

[vi] In Kingston, international students enrolled at Queens University saw a 112% hike in tuition in 2017 (Ireton 2019). According to Statistics Canada (2019) tuition fees were up another 7.6% in 2019 to $29,714 for international undergraduate students in comparison to $6,463 for domestic students.

[vii] The increased acceptance of international students as permanent residents is part of the country's increasing use of a two-step migration route to selecting immigrants (International Student Connect nd; Skuterud 2016).

viii “Temporary Foreign Workers are critical to the agriculture sector and have been steadily increasing in Canada over the past twenty years. In 2018, there were nearly 55,000 jobs filled by temporary foreign workers in Canada’s agriculture industry and these accounted for 20 per cent of total employment in the primary agriculture sector. Although, temporary foreign workers in 2018 came from nearly 100 countries, the majority came from Mexico (51%); Guatemala (20%) and Jamaica (18%)” (Statistics Canada 2020, April 17).

ix The CEO of Sandy Shore Farms in Port Burwell Ontario, for example, noted that “we will see shortages within our grocery stores in spring, summer and fall if the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SWAP) is put on hold and we're not allowed to bring those workers in” (Lupton 2020). He further highlighted how crucial migrant workers are to food security by noting that “without access to the migrant worker program, I’m going to venture to say that some 90 to 95 per cent of the vegetables and the fruits that are normally produced and harvested in Canada will not see the light of day” (Lupton 2020). In addition, Conservative MP Dave Epp warned that food production for the year will be jeopardized and invited the Liberal government to “revisit its decision” (Maru 2020).

x Since 2019, the number of foreign workers in agriculture has fallen by 45% because of COVID-19 (RBC Economics 2020) with some 59,000 unfilled positions by April 2020 (Emmanuel, May 22).

xi *The New Yorker* created a telling video highlighting the plight of undocumented workers who do not have access to supports or healthcare and who are in constant threat of detention and deportation making them especially vulnerable to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic (The New Yorker 2020). In Canada, there has also been growing calls for those migrants who lack social insurance numbers and may have irregular status to be included as eligible for COVID-19 support packages offered by government as these individuals provide essential work in communities across the country (Keung 2020, May 4).

xii In Windsor-Essex, 18% of all COVID-19 cases have been reported to be farm workers (CBC News 2020, June 1). In southern Ontario the human rights group Justice for Migrant Workers estimated that 629 cases of COVID-19 have occurred among farm workers as of early June. Medial authorities place the official figure at about a third of this figure (Ferguson 2020). These numbers are extremely high and the outbreaks mark COVID-19 hot zones in Ontario.

xiii Migrant workers are also concerned about increased threats to their health which has resulted in many not returning to Canada this year. There is a likelihood that such problems may lead to production shortfalls, rising food prices (Seldon 2020) and increased food insecurity.

xiv While the Agri-Food Pilot program is a positive step forward, it is too limited, and it does not address the working conditions and low pay that keep migrant farm workers vulnerable and subject to higher health risks (Fraser 2020). COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated poor working conditions on farms and greenhouses (Migrant Workers Alliance for Change 2020). Migrant farm workers have long reported abuse, racism, harassment, psychological pressure and exposure to pesticides while working (CBC 2018). Accordingly, post-COVID-19 policies should not only entail a more stable legal status but also more equitable working conditions. As a result of COVID-19 outbreaks in Ontario, Premier Ford committed $15 million to farmers (up to $7,500 per farm) to improve crowed housing and other safety measures. However, activists argue that the funding is inadequate and greater investments in worker health and safety, more inspections and the extension of rights for workers are needed (Ferguson 2020, A9).

It has become clear during this crisis that while migrant famer workers are essential they remain under protected (Chisholm 2020). The need for migrant workers is evident but given the limited ways employers and government have moved to protect and compensate these worker raises serious questions about how they are actually valued as workers with rights (Paradkar 2020).

xv The U.S. is a case in point where, as *The New York Times* observes, America is struggling with managing the “parallel plagues” of coronavirus and widespread racial unrest – forces that work at cross-purposes (Healy and Searcey

2020, June 1). Of course, in the highly polarized political climate of the U.S. trust in government is at low levels (Funk and Tyson 2020).

xvi Quebec, it should be noted, has also permanently raised its minimum wage by 60 cents to $13.10 an hour (Norton Rose Fulbright 2020). This is still considerably below the $15 an hour that many advocates consider to be necessary as a living or fair wage (Hannan, Bauder and Shields 2016).

xvii In the U.S., Minneapolis stands out during the pandemic as it has created a relief fund to help the most vulnerable, undocumented migrants in the city (Nesterak 2020).

xviii This is particularly important during times of crisis. Hudson (2020) reminds us that COVID-19 represents "a biological enemy that respects no legal or political barriers and makes no distinction between citizens and non-citizens", but immigrants with precarious status remain much more vulnerable because of their more limited access to resources and legal protections. Toronto was the first city in Canada to declare itself a sanctuary city, and more recently Montreal followed suit. During the pandemic the cities have been active in working to support vulnerable migrants.

xix An IRCC *News Release* dated March 12, 2020 regarding the new immigration levels plan is worthy of quoting at length as it articulates the commitment to expanding immigration numbers and it provides the rationale behind the importance of planned immigration growth. This rationale is centred on addressing an aging population and workforce, economic drivers fostered by immigration, regional development, and linguistic considerations. As the *News Release* states:

"The new plan will benefit all Canadians because immigration drives economic growth, spurs innovation and helps employers access the talent they need to thrive. Welcoming more newcomers will help to address the demographic challenges of an aging population and to compete and win in a competitive global marketplace.

"The proposed plan is based on the solid economic foundation of the previous levels plan and continues to responsibly grow the number of permanent residents admitted to Canada each year, from 341,000 in 2020 to 351,000 in 2021 and 361,000 in 2022.

"With this plan, the Government will implement a number of key commitments:

- responsibly grow Canada's population;
- take the steps to make the Atlantic Immigration Pilot a permanent program to continue supporting economic growth in Atlantic Canada, with 5,000 admissions;
- create a new stream to provide a safe haven for human rights advocates, journalists and humanitarian workers at risk abroad;
- facilitate the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot and the Agri-Food Immigration Pilot, to address specific labour market shortages;
- support family reunification through sustained high admissions; and
- reduce application processing times and improve service delivery and client services at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

"We will also continue to implement our plan to increase Francophone immigration outside Quebec, while supporting the successful integration and retention of French-speaking newcomers and strengthening Francophone communities.

"With increased space for the Provincial Nominee Program, an Atlantic Immigration Program, and the Agri-Food and Rural and Northern Immigration Pilots, the levels plan directly addresses labour market needs across Canada to ensure businesses can get the talent they need, where they need it.

Quotes

“Our immigration system benefits all Canadians by strengthening the middle class, keeping families together and building strong and inclusive communities. This increase in immigration levels supports a system that will help Canadian business create good middle class jobs and grow the economy while ensuring Canada continues to meet its humanitarian obligations around the world.”

– The Honourable Marco E. L. Mendicino, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

“Quick facts

- This new 3-year plan demonstrates that Canada’s well-managed immigration system continues to maintain public confidence, and increases permanent immigration to almost 1% of the population by 2022.
- A significant stakeholder and public engagement exercise—including public opinion research and stakeholder consultations—was carried out in 2019, which enabled IRCC to obtain broad perspectives that have directly impacted all elements of the plan” (IRCC 2020, March 12).

xx Between April and May 2020, Statistics Canada notes that there was a 75% drop in the number of people who were able to attain permanent resident status (2020, July 22).

xxi With high unemployment the political appeal of supporting domestic workers over ‘newcomer competition’ will also be made. The case of the U.S. is instructive in this regard. The Trump administration has used the COVID-19 economic recession as explicit reasoning to close the U.S. to immigration, the only country to explicitly do so (Chishti and Pierce 2020, May 29; Riechmann and Spagat 2020).

xxii Job losses are at a much higher level than the entire 2008/09 recession where only 23% of charities faced layoffs (Imagine Canada 2020, 2).

xxiii This contrasts with the last recession where there was a strong overall increase in demand for services, although also a problem of loss of capacity (Imagine Canada 2020, 4, 17).

xxiv Many non-profits were not in a position to keep operations open during the shutdown phase of the pandemic and have suffered significant job losses (Mathieu 2020) as need has magnified. Other figures paint a similar story to Imagine Canada’s study: “In March, Imagine Canada projected that almost 200,000 jobs will be lost in the sector if social distancing is enforced for six months. According to a more recent Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN) survey, about a third of charities, non-profits, and non-profit cooperatives had to either reduce hours or lay off staff; four out of 10 were operating with “low financial reserves;” close to 20% had shut down or planned to; and almost one in five had just a month’s revenue to keep them afloat. (The survey results were compiled from 483 responses gathered in late March and early April, with results published April 6.)” (Mathieu 2020).

xxv How clients and settlement service staff and leadership are adapting is a mixed story. A recent qualitative survey (North York Community House, et al. 2020) suggests that overall workers and management have been resilient and adapted as best they can under the circumstances and in many cases with great success. Most are happy to be able to continue to work carrying out the mission of their organizations and serve clients in need. Of course, there remains a lot of uncertainty and stress associated with their work (2020, 8). The shift has created a great increase in the workload. An unattributed saying in the settlement sector during the pandemic is that “it is not business as usual it is more business than usual”. This raises a problem of burnout and mental health issues for staff. This may especially come to the forefront with the return to more normal operations. There were also issues raised about whether all workers were able to work from home; did they have the proper technology and access to a workspace to be able to conduct their business from a distance (Camona 2020)?

xxvi For social service organizations 54% said they were able to move programs online (Imaging Canada 2020, 6), but clearly many organizations were not able to do so. The pandemic, based on these early figures, has had a significant negative impact, greater than in the last recession, on the ability of non-profits to deliver their services in the context of high existing and pent-up demand.

xxvii Some non-profits have innovated in other ways like the Toronto Bangladeshi Youth for Social Justice (BYSJ) organization that has created an Employment Insurance (EI) and a Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) Guide for Bengali speaking residents. Overall, the non-profit sector, while remaining very vulnerable, has shown resilience in their ability to adjust to the circumstances (Harper 2020, March 24). In times of crisis, non-profits like ACCES are known to be innovators (The Philanthropist 2020). Nonetheless, the settlement sector overall has been constrained in its response by the limitations in its technical capacities including the digital skills of it staff.

xxviii There have been beneficial learnings from the experience of going online. For some clients it has allowed for greater flexibility for accessing services. For many immigrant women it has allowed them to better manage childcare needs that can impact their access to services. In some cases, it has extended the geographical reach of some settlement organizations beyond their usual physical catchment areas providing access for newcomers in under- serviced regions. It is also clear that the pandemic has speeded up the movement to greater use of technology and online delivery in the sector. These learnings can be incorporated into programing for the future in ways that enhance service for immigrants.

xxix In the U.S. the pandemic aid packages explicitly exclude more recent immigrants (permanent residents), temporary and irregular migrants from income supports and most health benefits (Chishti and Pierce 2020, March 26). The pandemic has greatly increased the concern for worker security, especially for the most vulnerable like migrant and immigrant workers (OECD 2020, July 8).

xxx In Europe, there has been serious debate about the potential value of a basic income policy that has been elevated because of the pandemic. This has been especially vocal in Spain, Ireland and Germany (Shanahan and Smith 2020). Spain in fact has recently passed a modified version of the basic income policy that will cover about 850,000 low-income people paying out 462 euros a month. The goal is to move toward expanding the program to 2.3 million (Perez 2020). Portugal has taken the progressive step to extend health, welfare and other benefits to all migrants during the pandemic (Waldersee March 28, 2020; IMO 2020, Snapshot #28) and along with Italy has moved toward migrant regularization.

xxxi In fact, the U.S. officially entered into recession in February 2020, a month before the seriousness of the pandemic made itself felt in North America (Kreiter 2020).

xxxii Immigrants are expressing their feelings about their economic vulnerability. A Statistics Canada report, for example, notes that: "Over two-fifths of immigrant men (43%) reported that the crisis would have a 'major' or 'moderate' impact on their finances, compared with about one-quarter (27%) of Canadian-born men" (LaRochelle-Côé and Uppal 2020; Charles 2020).

xxxiii A meat packing facility in Brooks Alberta had 390 cases (Druden and Rieger 2020), and a Cargill plant south of Montreal has had 64 infected workers, which makes up around 13% of its workforce (Colin Harris 2020). Similarly, in the U.S., plants in Indiana and South Dakota recorded outbreaks of 890 and 853 (Druden and Rieger 2020). In the U.S. and Alberta, these work sites have been declared essential and required to stay open.

xxxiv In High River, Alberta, the total impact of infection traced to the Cargill plant was at least 1,500 (CBC Radio National News report, May 10, 2020; Keller and Dobby 2020).

xxxv The Workers Action Centre (https://workersactioncentre.org/) is one organization that has been very active in advocating for these workers' rights (Ladd 2020). Significantly, under heavy pressure the Prime Minister has advanced a commitment to bring in 10 paid sick days per year for workers. The justification for the measure is that it

is necessary to protect the health of other workers and hence, in the context of the pandemic, a necessary measure for the health of the larger society and economy (MacCharles 2020, May 25).

[xxxvi] Both Quebec and Ontario called in the Canadian military to help in a number of the worst COVID-19 hit long-term care facilities in the two provinces. The military reported horrific working and care conditions prompting commitment of government action to address the situation (Kirkup 2020).

[xxxvii] A report from the Migration Policy Institute examined the contribution that foreign trained healthcare professionals who currently are not employed in the U.S. at the level for which they are trained. It is estimated that some 263,000 immigrants and refugees are confined to low wage jobs, or are out of work. They are a resource that could be employed to address critical healthcare needs that have been in severe shortage during this crisis (Batalova and Fix 2020; Batalova 2020). In the UK there have been moves during the pandemic to use internally trained doctors, including refugees, as medical support workers (McVeigh 2020). As McVeigh notes:

"Hundreds of foreign-born doctors, including refugees, have signed up to become medical support workers as part of a new scheme aimed at helping the NHS tackle the coronavirus pandemic.

"NHS England launched the initiative for international medical graduates and doctors after calls to fast track the accreditation of overseas medics.

"The NHS plans to deploy the workers, who have passed an English language exam, in small numbers initially.

"The UN's refugee chief this week called for more countries to allow refugee medical professionals to tackle the health crisis." (McVeigh 2020).

[xxxviii] In Canada, and elsewhere in the world, there have been much larger protests held in solidarity with U.S. anti-racist mass popular actions. These protests are also a demonstration against domestic racism and discrimination as well (Sharp 2020; Hernández and Mueller 2020). The street actions are an indication of the power of the pandemic to intersect with socio-economic and political divides to disrupt the status quo.

[xxxix] It is, of course, the case that all public policy involves political choice and the kind of priorities and questions they ask of scientists. Still some public policy makes more use of science evidence to inform their policymaking (Bacevic 2020).

[xl] A migrant rights community activist tellingly observed that the ability to social distance was "itself a sign of privilege" (Lindeman 2020). Public health experts note that the health inequalities that have emerged from the pandemic are completely understandable and predictable because of the socio-democratic profiles of these neighborhoods (Shingler and Stevenson 2020, May 8).

[xli] The title of an article in *The Guardian* is revealing: "Coronavirus does discriminate, because that's what humans do" (Solnit 2020).