# Local Policies and Women Immigrants in Rural Regions and little towns in

Canada

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#### Bordering on Numerous Research Projects

- On Immigration in Regions out of metropolitan centres in Canada (SSHRC)
- On Local and Municipal Diversity Policies in Small Urban and Rural Regions (SSHRC)
- On The Mobility of Women Immigrants After Initial Settlement in Regions of Quebec and On Related Policies (Status of Women Canada)

#### Context

- In Canada, more than 80% of the immigrant population settle in one of the 3 major metropolitan areas
- Rural or regional immigration, new political direction in Canada and in many provinces including Quebec
- Immigration, the new regional and local reality in many Canadian municipalities
- Diversity, a result of this immigration, new data to consider for local policies

### Overview of Regional Immigration in Canada

- In Quebec: over-representation of refugees for a total of 50% independent immigrants 50% refugees
- Certain areas in Quebec welcome 100% of first or second destination refugees
- For the most part, other Canadian provinces welcome independent immigrants or second destination refugees (Alberta, Manitoba)
- Home countries are becoming more and more diversified and are increasing in numbers

## Women Immigrants in Rural and Semi-urban Areas

- Immigrants are about 50% men and 50% women
- Due to their migration path or their status, women who arrive in rural and semi-urban regions are for the most part with their families
- They have between 1 and 10 children with them
- Many of them are heads of families when they arrive in Canada or become a single parent in the years shortly after
- After their arrival, many will even welcome their mothers or mothers-in-law
- They are the first participants in informal transnational networks

## Women Immigrants in Rural Areas

- For Rural Areas, Women Immigrants, such as Men are arriving first in Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia
- In rural areas Women Immigrants have less Jobs than Immigrant Men
- Women Immigrants have higher Scholarship Nivel than Canadian Women and Men living in Rural Areas
- Their Gains are inferior to those of Men Immigrants and Women born in Canada

#### **Analysis Aspects of Local Policies Regarding Diversity and Immigration**

- 1 Policy, consultant and administrative structures implemented by municipalities dealing with diversity;
- 2 Proposed projects, methods, programs, services and policies with regards to ethnic and cultural diversity;
- 3- Partnership, collaboration and communication processes implemented between diverse local representatives, including municipal organizations, as well as the nature of established relationship (if any) between local authorities and other levels of government (provincial and federal);
- 4 The perception that ethnic, religious and cultural minorities have of these municipal policies, methods and strategies in their regions.

#### Women's Place in Local Immigration Policies

- Preliminary analysis: don't occupy any specific place in any of these aspects. Women are virtually invisible in rural and semi-urban regions
- Women's needs are rarely or never taken into consideration
- Representation of women immigrants by local groups
   family members (mother, spouse, daughter), nongender biased immigrant participants
- Gender is even less apparent when immigrants are in rural regions.

### What Women Immigrants Want from Local Policies

- The importance of taking into account the diverse facets of their identity: wives, mothers, immigrants, refugees, members of a family, origins, skills, professional experience, migratory path, a network etc...
- The importance of putting in place mechanisms to accompany them in their adaptation
- The importance of understanding that they are affected and often the first affected by welcoming and integration structures: welcoming organizations, social and health services, schools, employment assistance, housing assistance, transportation assistance, daycare assistance etc...
- Think about actively implicating them in dialogue and consultations

### Conclusion on Local Policies and Retention

- Local policies aim to retain immigrant families in their region
- A large number of these families are extremely mobile and after an initial immigration will quickly change regions to try and move up the social ladder
- Women, via their networks and according to their needs, are important participants in this mobility
- Taking into consideration the needs and expectations of women immigrants in local policies would greatly influence the retention of families