

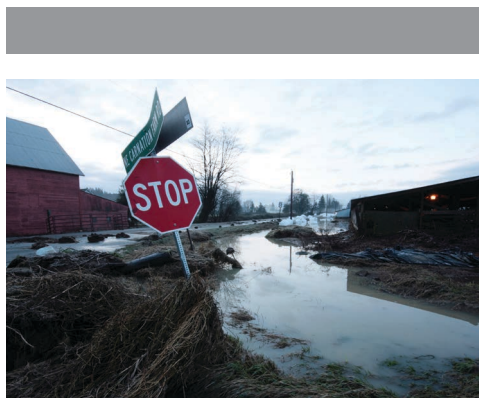
Preparing BC for Climate Migration

by Stephanie Dickson,
Sophie Webber and
Tim K. Takaro

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CCPA
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BC Office



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CLIMATE JUSTICE PROJECT

This paper is part of the Climate Justice Project, a five-year research project led by the CCPA-BC and the University of BC. The Climate Justice Project studies the social and economic impacts of climate change and develops innovative green policy solutions that are both effective and equitable. The project is supported primarily by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council through its Community-University Research Alliance program. Thanks also to Vancity and the Vancouver Foundation for their financial support of the Climate Justice Project.



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Contents

SUMMARY	5
PART 1 Introduction and Background: A Question of Climate Justice	8
PART 2 Climate Change, the Environment and Migration	12
PART 3 Starting the Conversation	16
PART 4 Climate Change and Canada’s Immigration Policies	21
PART 5 Moving the Conversation Forward	25

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Preparing BC for Climate Migration

CLIMATE CHANGE IS ONE FACTOR that interacts with many others to drive population movements. Estimates of the number of climate-influenced migrants range widely, but most projections agree that in the coming years climate change will compel hundreds of millions of people to relocate and that many forced migrants will remain in nearby poor regions in the Global South.

Canada has disproportionately benefitted from the combustion of fossil fuels. Canada's share of the world population was less than 0.5 per cent in 2012, but our historical share of global GHG emissions is 2.1 per cent. Importantly for the future, as a wealthy nation, Canada has resources that will help it to adapt to future climate-related stressors, and it is well positioned to help other countries respond to climate change.

Many countries are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change than Canada. In some areas of the Global South, governments and communities have lower adaptive capacity due to social, economic and political factors. Yet these countries bear the brunt of the impacts of natural disasters, making up 97 per cent of climate-induced global mortality. It will primarily be populations in the Global South that are temporarily or permanently displaced due to climate change.

Despite this injustice, Canada's federal and provincial governments have yet to define our responsibilities to those displaced by climate change. This paper describes our collective obligation to climate migrants and evaluates where we are in meeting these responsibilities.

With input from a research advisory group composed of experts from frontline immigration and refugee organizations, immigration lawyers and academics, we surveyed point-of-service providers and organization directors to determine:

- Whether service-provider organizations are familiar with environmental degradation as a driver of migration;
- What BC's adaptive capacity for climate-based migration is, and what policies and programs need to be developed or strengthened to build such adaptive capacity; and
- What BC's socio-cultural capacity is for climate-based migration, and what steps can be taken to ensure an inclusive response to mass migration.

This paper describes our collective obligation to climate migrants and evaluates where we are in meeting these responsibilities.

The results of these surveys, as well as 10 key-informant interviews with experts in the areas of housing, health, law, government and the non-governmental sector, led to the following conclusions and recommendations.

There are serious gaps in current policies and thinking when it comes to climate migration, including:

- Neither our senior governments, nor the leadership of our health, housing and other core service systems, are thinking about, let alone planning for, what climate migration may require of our social, cultural, service and infrastructure systems.
- Immigration and refugee policy and practice are not currently designed to accommodate the underlying reality of climate change and migration;
- Current immigration policies stack the odds against the most vulnerable people and draw a false distinction between “deserving” and “undeserving” migrants; and
- More migrants will require enhanced settlement and other social services, but service-provider organizations are already stretched thin.

Further, despite Canada’s reputation for being open to immigrants and enjoying a diverse and multicultural society, our recent history has seen bigoted policies and practices that continue to result in the exclusion of some of the most vulnerable people.

The researchers reviewed Canada’s current immigration policies to determine how they could be re-engineered to address climate migrants. We found:

- Canada’s overall immigration numbers represent a tiny fraction of global climate migration. We admit about 250,000 immigrants per year, an amount that has changed little since the early 1990s. And of that, the share of refugees has fallen from a high of 23 per cent in 1991 to just 9 per cent in 2012.
- Current practices not only leave those who are most vulnerable behind, but they also remove more educated persons from the very countries that need them most. This erodes the adaptive capacity of regions that will receive the bulk of climate migrants.

There are three existing areas of Canada’s Immigration and Refugee Protection Act that could be used to accommodate climate migrants:

- The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration may temporarily suspend removal orders for people who become displaced while in Canada. This occurred for Haitian visitors following the 2010 earthquake.
- Climate migrants could be granted permanent residency on “humanitarian and compassionate grounds”.
- Refugees situated outside of Canada may apply to immigrate if sponsored by certain private groups.

However, this report recommends that greater support and certainty would be provided if Canada created a new immigration class of “climate migrants” along with targets and programs to ensure Canada absorbs its fair share of those migrants. A potentially larger challenge is rallying public opinion and support for those climate migrants.

Neither our senior governments, nor the leadership of our health, housing and other core service systems, are thinking about, let alone planning for, what climate migration may require of our social, cultural, service and infrastructure systems.

Further, the report recommends:

- **Key services should be made accessible to climate migrants.** While settlement counselling and health services are both currently available, all immigrants and refugees could benefit from better co-ordination of those services and access to other services including legal, housing and education. More funding should also be allocated to reduce strain on these already-overloaded systems and to allow increased migration.
- **Given that most climate migrants will remain in the Global South, Canada should substantially increase its support to developing countries shouldering the burden of climate displacement.** Canada owes a “climate debt” to the nations bearing the greatest impacts, including countries that will assist and settle climate migrants. This is not a matter of charity or generosity but one of justice and reparation, which was codified in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties agreement in 2013.

The Canadian government must take seriously its responsibility to help accommodate climate migrants.

The Canadian government must take seriously its responsibility to help accommodate climate migrants, reassure the public that all levels of government are taking steps to address the impacts on social services involved and invite society as a whole to undertake this ethical responsibility together.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

A question of climate justice

Global damage from climate change itself and fossil fuel development was estimated at \$1.2 trillion per year, or 1.6 per cent of world GDP.

THIS PAPER EXAMINES OFTEN-IGNORED QUESTIONS of climate justice: given Canada's historical and ongoing contribution to global warming, what is our collective obligation to people fleeing regions most affected by climate change, and how prepared are we to meet these obligations? According to 2008 World Resources Institute climate data,¹ Canada ranked fourth among the highest per-capita global greenhouse gas (GHG) emitters, and those estimates did not include emissions resulting from fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) exported from Canada and utilized beyond our borders. Given our contribution, what can Canada do to meet our obligations and prepare for increases in migration in the future?

The world is already witnessing the impacts of climate change on lives and livelihoods. Global damage from climate change itself and fossil fuel development (pipeline spills, etc.) was estimated at \$1.2 trillion per year, or 1.6 per cent of world GDP in 2010, and is projected to rise to 3.2 per cent in 2030.² Over the past four years alone, the severity of extreme weather events has had an impact on millions of lives.

- In 2013, President Aquino of the Philippines declared a state of calamity following a typhoon that killed thousands of people and affected more than 9 million.³
- In 2010, flash floods in Pakistan killed 1,800 people and affected 21 million.⁴
- In 2011, tens of thousands of people, almost half of them children, died during the devastating drought in East Africa.⁵

1 World Resources Institute. CAIT 2.0. WRI's Climate Data Explorer. October 2014. <http://cait2.wri.org>.

2 DARA and the Climate Vulnerable Forum. Climate Vulnerability Monitor 2nd Edition: A Guide to the Cold Calculus of a Hot Planet. September 2012. <http://daraint.org/climate-vulnerability-monitor/climate-vulnerability-monitor-2012/>.

3 BBC Asia News. Typhoon Haiyan: Philippines declares state of calamity. November 11, 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-24901993>.

4 BBC Asia News. Pakistan floods "kill more than 400" over past fortnight. September 28, 2012. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-19763569>.

5 Simon Tisdall. January 18, 2012. *The Guardian*. East Africa's drought: The avoidable disaster. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jan/18/east-africa-drought-disaster-report>.

- In 2012, flash floods and landslides in Bangladesh killed 70 people and affected 200,000.⁶
- In 2012 and 2014, monsoon floods in Pakistan killed hundreds of people and affected millions.

Extreme weather has also become common in North America: Hurricane Sandy in the final days of the 2012 US presidential campaign, which forced climate change onto the platform; extreme drought in California and the US Midwest; flooding in Calgary and Toronto in 2013; and extreme cold across the continent from the 2013–14 “polar vortex.” Richer nations generally have superior adaptive capacities to rebuild damaged property or to make proactive adaptation investments. However, within wealthy countries, it is typically the poorest people who have the least capacity to respond to extreme weather—for instance, they have a limited ability to pay higher cooling bills during summer heat waves and the fewest resources to rebuild after storms and floods.

Displacements induced by climate changes may be temporary or may require permanent resettlement. Relocation due to land loss is already a reality for some. In one recent example, the entire population of the village of Newtok, Alaska, is being forced to relocate because shoreline erosion has rendered the area uninhabitable.⁷ This is also true for many people resident in low-lying coastal areas of small island nations in the Pacific whose lands are being inundated and livelihoods impacted. With rising sea levels, these forced migrations will only get worse over coming decades. Vulnerability in these coastal communities can be complicated by additional factors, such as in the central Pacific atoll nation of Kiribati, where sea-level rise affects communities in tandem with the effects of shoreline manipulation from land reclamation, beach mining and the construction of causeways, as well as winds and waves from natural climate variability.⁸

In this paper, we examine human displacement associated with extreme weather events and longer-term changes in local climate and related conditions. Our goals are to better understand the knowledge level of service providers about climate migrants, the impacts on social services in Canada from such migrants and where service gaps may develop, and how current migration policy—with its focus on economic-class immigrants—affects the more vulnerable, “irregular” immigrants. We also hope to identify ways Canada, and BC in particular, can prepare for increased and episodic migration.

Even absent climate considerations, Canada has moral obligations to provide humanitarian assistance and to take actions that facilitate peace and order in other parts of the world. Industrialized countries like Canada have disproportionately benefitted from the combustion of fossil fuels, whereas others who have contributed least to climate change will disproportionately feel its impacts. Despite this, at present, there is little interest at the federal and provincial government levels to reduce Canada’s carbon emissions; indeed, much more effort is being put into expanding carbon-extractive industries. At the international level, Canada has acted to thwart international negotiations on climate change, and it has not supported UN-sponsored measures that would provide financial assistance to countries affected by climate change.

Industrialized countries like Canada have disproportionately benefitted from the combustion of fossil fuels, whereas others who have contributed least to climate change will disproportionately feel its impacts.

6 Anis Ahmed. June 27, 2012. Reuters. Seventy dead, 200,000 stranded in Bangladesh floods. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/27/us-bangladesh-floods-idUSBRE85Q07A20120627>.

7 Climate Adaptation Knowledge Exchange. Relocating the village of Newtok, Alaska due to coastal erosion. Accessed from: <http://www.cakex.org/case-studies/relocating-village-newtok-alaska-due-coastal-erosion>; Suzanne Goldenberg. August 5, 2013. The Guardian. Relocation of Alaska’s sinking Newtok village halted. <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/aug/05/alaska-newtok-climate-change>.

8 S.D. Donner. 2012. Sea level rise and the ongoing battle of Tarawa. *EOS* 93(17):169–176.

Migrants, immigrants and refugees: What do all the categories mean?

Conceptualizing and defining groups of people in relation to climate migration is complicated,ⁱ because environmental drivers interact with a mixture of social, economic and political factors to influence migration decisions, and mobility has long been an adaptive strategy to cope with change.ⁱⁱ Despite the risk inherent in oversimplification, operational definitions are necessary so that nations can develop informed policies to respond to people affected by climate change.

A 1985 UN Environment Programme (UNEP) report popularized the term “environmental refugees,” defined as “people who have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of a marked environmental disruption (natural and/or triggered by people) that jeopardized their existence and/or seriously affected the quality of their life.”ⁱⁱⁱ Others use the term “environmental refugees” differently,^{iv} and many organizations use more politically neutral terms, opting for “migrants” or “displaced people.”

Each label has embedded meaning that may have unintended implications. For instance, “migrants” might imply that movement is voluntary, whereas “refugees” implies migration is forced and that they may claim protection under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (the “Convention”). “Migrants” is problematic because it doesn’t fully capture the complex mixture of factors that drive migration; it also fails to include people who are involuntarily displaced. “Refugees” is even more complicated: the Convention narrowly defines a refugee as a person with a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of “race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.”^v Thus, using this term may have unintended consequences for asylum seekers by adding more migrants to a country’s already backlogged immigration system, which could further limit the pace at which applications are reviewed.

Another problem is that many who experience the impacts of climate change, alongside other shocks, do not wish to be labelled “climate refugees.”^{vi} The label “climate refugees” can create apocalyptic narratives of climate change. This language can victimize those that might move and ignore their political will. For some, migration is a source of adaptive strength. Additionally, by referencing “climate” this label can naturalize issues that are the results of social and economic marginalization. Moreover, these narratives can further securitize migration, reinforcing conservative and restrictive approaches to migration in receiving countries.^{vii}

While we recognize that there is ongoing debate regarding the voluntary or involuntary nature of migration, our analytical lens is informed by the following definition given by the International Organization for Migration (2010):

“Environmental migrants are persons or groups of persons who, for reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to have to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their territory or abroad.”^{viii}

There is little interest at the federal and provincial government levels to reduce Canada’s carbon emissions; indeed, much more effort is being put into expanding carbon-extractive industries.

For the purposes of this paper, we use the term “climate migrant” to identify a subcategory of environmental migrants who are displaced in significant part by the effects of climate change.

- i F. Biermann and I. Boas. 2010. Preparing for a warmer world: Towards a global governance system to protect climate refugees. *Global Environmental Politics* 10(1):60–88. E. Piguet. 2013. From “primitive migration” to “climate refugee”: The curious fate of the natural environment in migration studies. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 103(1):148–162.
- ii R. Black, W.N. Adger, N.W. Arnell et al. 2011. The effect of environmental change on human migration. *Global Environmental Change* 21S:S3-S11.
- iii E. El-Hinnawi *Environmental Refugees* (Nairobi: United Nations Environment Program, 1985). For a critique of this study, see: A. Surhke. 1994. Environmental degradation and population flows. *Journal of International Affairs* 47: 473–496 and D.C. Bates. 2002. Environmental refugees? Classifying migrations caused by environmental change. *Population and Environment* 23(5): 465–477.
- iv For example, N. Myers and J. Kent. *Environmental Exodus. An Emergent Crisis in the Global Arena* (Washington, DC: Climate Institute, 1995). <?> The 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.
- v The 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees..
- vi C. Farbotko and H. Lazrus. 2012. The first climate refugees? Contesting global narratives of climate change in Tuvalu. *Global Environmental Change* 22:382–390.
- vii B. Hartmann. 2010. Rethinking climate refugees and climate conflict: Rhetoric, reality and the politics of policy discourse. *Journal of International Development* 22(2):233–246; G. Bettini. 2013. Climate barbarians at the gate? A critique of apocalyptic narratives on “climate refugees.” *Geoforum* 45:63–72.
- viii Although tectonic events—including volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis—give rise to displacement, they have not been linked to climate change.

For the purposes of this paper, we use the term “climate migrant” to identify a subcategory of environmental migrants who are displaced in significant part by the effects of climate change.

Thus, it is not surprising that federal and provincial governments have not accepted their responsibilities for people who may migrate to Canada due to climate change. This paper aims to begin that challenging conversation, noting that the issue has been previously raised in popular media (including in articles in the *Georgia Straight*, *Vancouver Sun* and others) and in some federal reports.⁹ We argue that federal and provincial governments should develop a comprehensive policy framework to manage climate migration. Our research offers some perspective on and context for the public conversation that is needed.

9 In 2004, the Canadian Security Intelligence Agency flagged climate migration as a prospective concern (Canadian Security Intelligence Agency. Archived: Commentary No. 86: Climate change, migration and security. Accessed October 30, 2013, from: <http://www.csis-scirs.gc.ca/pblctns/cmmntr/cm86-eng.asp>), and a Library of Parliament publication in 2010 also flagged the issue (P. Becklumb. 2010. *Climate Change and Forced Migration: Canada's Role*. Library of Parliament. Retrieved from: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/LOP/ResearchPublications/2010-04-e.html>).

Climate change, the environment and migration

DESPITE SOME RECENT WEATHER EXTREMES, southern Canada has been relatively insulated from the most profound human consequences of climate change. This is mainly due to the robust infrastructure and adaptive capacity Canada enjoys. Other countries are not so lucky; some of the least developed have large populations living in high-impact landscapes such as low-lying, flood-prone river systems or deltas; have resource limitations; and have limited adaptive capacity, making them more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The world map in Figure 1 depicts the variance in vulnerability across the globe using 33 indicators in a multi-domain index (economy; natural resource security; ecosystems; poverty; population; settlement and infrastructure; and institutions, governance and social capital). While such maps must be interpreted cautiously,¹⁰ they can indicate potential “hot spots” for future migration.

It is a cruel global irony that those who contributed the least to climate change will disproportionately feel its impacts, and indeed already do.

Canada can afford adaptive strategies because of the industrial activity that has contributed to its high GHG emissions, and this underscores the issue of fairness and justice at the heart of climate migration. It is a cruel global irony that those who contributed the least to climate change will disproportionately feel its impacts, and indeed already do.¹¹

Reasons to migrate are multiple and varied and are interconnected with many factors that mutually reinforce one another.¹² People move from one region to another to improve social and economic circumstances, to seek better opportunities for their children and to reunite with family members already living abroad. In more extreme circumstances, decisions to migrate are made under exceptionally difficult conditions.

Climate change is best understood as one factor that interacts with many others to drive population movement.¹³ Because climate change is occurring in social, demographic, political and economic contexts, impacts will be differentially felt depending on these conditions in a particular

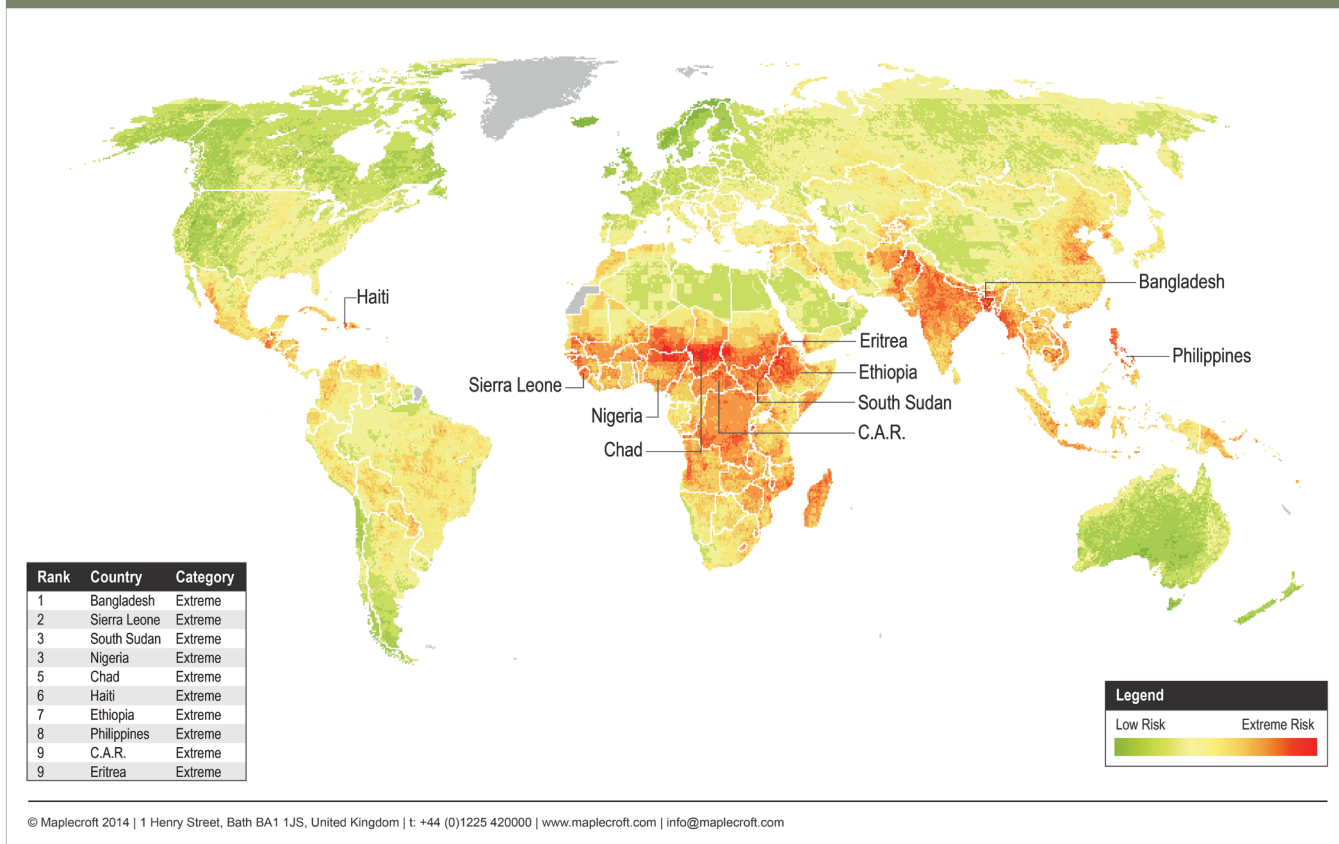
10 J. Barnett, S. Lambert and I. Fry. 2008. The hazards of indicators: Insights from the Environmental Vulnerability Index. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 98(1):102–119.

11 W.N. Adger et al. 2006. *Fairness in Adaptation to Climate Change* (Cambridge, MA, and London, UK: MIT Press, 2006).

12 E. Piguet, A. Pecoud and P. de Guchteneire. 2011 Migration and climate change: An overview. *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 30(3):1–23; Black et al. 2011.

13 Piguet et al. 2011.

Figure 1: Maplecroft climate change vulnerability index 2015.



region and the resiliency of affected communities. Some researchers¹⁴ explain these differential impacts as a function of vulnerability, which depends on levels of both exposure to the impact and adaptive capacity.

A key determinant of adaptive capacity is household wealth: wealthier families will be able to afford more choices when the environment changes around them. In other words, those whose choices are constrained by social and financial capital will feel the impacts of climate change more acutely.¹⁵ For many populations, migration will be the only adaptive strategy available for coping with climate change,¹⁶ just as it has been a strategy for coping with other types of change in the past.¹⁷ Poorer global regions may also take on the greatest burden of migration pressures. Most climate migration is local and regional; poor people are generally unable to migrate overseas and they move instead to nearby regions.¹⁸ These regions are often least able to cope with increased settlement.

For many populations, migration will be the only adaptive strategy available for coping with climate change.

14 R. McLeman and B. Smit. 2006. Migration as an adaptation to climate change. *Climatic Change* 76:31–53.

15 R. Black, N.W. Arnell, W.N. Adger et al. 2013. Migration, immobility and displacement outcomes following extreme events. *Environmental Science and Policy* 27S:532–543.

16 F. Renaud et al. 2007. Control, adapt or flee: How to face environmental migration? *InterSecTions*. Institute for Environmental and Human Security.

17 D.K. Bardsley and G.J. Hugo. 2010. Migration and climate change: Examining thresholds of change to guide effective adaptation decision-making. *Population and Environment* 32:238–262; G.J. Hugo, *Migration, Development and Environment* (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2008).

18 Black et al. 2013; C. Gray. 2013. Human migration in a changing climate. *Global Environmental Politics* 13(1):128–132.

Migration is also affected by the particular climate change impact at issue. Some impacts, such as rising sea levels or desertification, are slow and progressive, whereas others are sudden climate events, such as floods, monsoons, hurricanes and cyclones. Both can drive migration decisions, but those decisions are made in different ways.¹⁹ Where changes are slow—such as years of successive crop failure—the decisions are likely to be more planned and deliberate compared to the reactive decisions that may result when climate changes are sudden.²⁰

It is understandably difficult to assess how much migration is directly fuelled by climate change. Estimates range from tens of thousands of people to hundreds of millions. Some authors base estimates on populations at risk, such as the number of people in low-elevation coastal zones, for which estimates vary from 400 to 600 million (although not all of these people will migrate).²¹ Another frequently cited figure estimates 200 million climate migrants by 2050,²² though this has been heavily criticized in academic circles for several reasons. These assessments are overly simplistic and unilinear: projecting physical changes and counting the exposed populations while ignoring other adaptations. The relations between climate drivers and migration are not this clear.²³ More recent and sophisticated modelling still underplays the role that migration plays, and has historically played, as an adaptive strategy to various shocks, subject to behavioural and structural conditions, which are difficult to measure.²⁴ Additionally, specific numbers are difficult to predict because studies operate with varying definitions.²⁵ However, the discourse and literature on this complex interaction are growing.²⁶

With changes like desertification and sea-level rise, out-migration may be inevitable over the long term. Processes such as these, in combination with social, economic and biophysical changes, threaten livelihoods and may force people to move in order to access basic goods like food and clean water.²⁷ Rising sea levels present a stark example by threatening entire island states, such as Tuvalu and Kiribati in the Pacific and millions of people on the coast of Bangladesh²⁸ as well as

Processes such as desertification and sea-level rise, in combination with social, economic and biophysical changes, threaten livelihoods and may force people to move in order to access basic goods like food and clean water.

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- 19 L Marchiori and I. Schumacher. 2011. When nature rebels: International migration, climate change and inequality. *Journal of Population Economics* 24:569–600; S. Martin. 2010. Climate change, migration and governance. *Global Governance* 16:397–414; C. Mortreux and J. Barnett. 2009. Climate change, migration and adaptation in Funafutu, Tuvalu. *Global Environmental Change* 19(1):105–112; Kniveton et al. *Climate Change and Migration: Improving Methodologies to Estimate Flows* (Geneva: International Organization for Migration—Migration Research Series, 2008).
- 20 Martin 2010.
- 21 G. MacGranahan et al. 2007. The rising tide: Assessing the risks of climate change and human settlements in low elevation coastal zones. *Environment and Urbanization* 19(17):17–37; D. Anthoff et al. 2006. Global and regional exposure to large rises in sea-level: A sensitivity analysis. Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research—Working Paper (96).
- 22 Norman Myers predicts that 200 million people will be on the move or permanently displaced by 2050 as a result of environmental factors. N. Myers. Environmental refugees: An emergent security issue. 13th Economic Forum, Prague, May 2005.
- 23 Piguet et al. 2011.
- 24 Black et al. 2011.
- 25 Biermann and Boas 2010.
- 26 E. Carr. 2005. Placing the environment in migration: environment, economy and power in Ghana’s Central Region. *Environment and Planning A* 37:925–946; R. McLeman and B. Smit, 2006.; S.L. Perch-Nielsen et al. 2008. Exploring the link between climate change and migration. *Climatic Change* 91:375–39; K. Warner et al. 2010. Climate change, environmental degradation and migration. *Natural Hazards* 55(3):689–715; F. Renaud et al. 2011. A decision framework for environmentally-induced migration. *International Migration* 49:e5–e29; R. Black et al. 2011. The effect of environmental change on human migration. *Global Environmental Change*; and IOM.
- 27 Many women in the Sahel region of Africa must travel great distances in order to fetch water. If the journey increases, permanent migration might be the only remaining option. M. De Wit and J. Stankiewicz. Changes in surface water supply across Africa with predicted climate change. *Scient* 31(March 2006). Cited in IOM Migration Research Series 2008:17.
- 28 David Sukman. September 7, 2009. BBC News. Seas threaten 20 million in Bangladesh. Accessed from: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8240406.stm.

small communities in the Arctic.²⁹ Despite seeming a gradual process, sea-level rise will manifest in more sudden impacts too, such as during king tide events and storm surges, making places uninhabitable before they “disappear.”³⁰ Still, investments in large-scale land reclamation and changing ecological conditions can delay the immediate necessity of moving.³¹

In more extreme cases, rapid-onset events such as tropical cyclones, torrential rains and floods can quickly and dramatically displace populations. Millions of people are already affected by events of this nature each year. In 2010 alone, more than 208 million people were affected by natural disasters.³² Not surprisingly, the impacts are more pronounced in developing regions with limited adaptive capacity, where it is estimated that 97 per cent of disaster-related deaths occur.³³ Although many studies³⁴ indicate that sudden events result in internal short-term migration more often than long-term international movement, again this is a function of adaptive capacity and wealth. For low-income households, the choice to migrate, either temporarily or permanently, is significantly limited by resource and financial constraints.³⁵

29 H.P. Huntington et al. 2012. Towards a tipping point in responding to climate change: Rising costs, fewer options for Arctic and global societies. *Ambio* 41:66–74.

30 Donner 2012.

31 A.P. Webb and P.S. Kench. 2010. The dynamic response of reef islands to sea-level rise: Evidence from multi-decadal analysis of island change in the Central Pacific. *Global and Planetary Change* 72: 234–246

32 Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. 2012. Disaster Risk Reduction: *A Global Advocacy Guide*. http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/disasters/reducing_risks/DRR-advocacy-guide.pdf.

33 Ibid.

34 S. Lonergan. 1998. The role of environmental degradation in population displacement. *Environmental Change and Security Project Report* (4):5–15; L.M. Hunter and M.J. White. 2003. Environmental hazards, migration and race. *Population and Environment* 25(1):23–29; N. Kliot. Environmentally induced population movements: Their complex sources and consequences—a critical review. In: J. Unruh, M. Krol and N. Kliot (eds.), *Environmental Change and its Implications for Population Migration*, pp. 69–99 (New York, NY: Springer, 2004)

35 Piguet et al. 2011.

Starting the conversation

IN ORDER TO START THE CONVERSATION IN BC, we recruited a team of experts to a research advisory group. Those experts included service providers from frontline immigration and refugee organizations as well as immigration lawyers and academics. The advisory team provided researchers with feedback on the content of our research instruments, which later became the foundation for two surveys. One survey was distributed to 30 frontline immigration and refugee service providers in BC, the other to 10 directors of these organizations. The surveys aimed to answer the following four questions:

It appears that no one at any level of government is stepping up to initiate or lead a conversation on climate change and its impacts on migration, which leaves any conceptualization of these challenges in a policy vacuum.

- Are service-provider organizations familiar with environmental degradation as a driver of migration?
- What is BC's adaptive capacity for climate-based migration, from the perspective of service providers and decision-makers?
- What policies and programs need to be developed or strengthened to build adaptive capacity in BC to deal with an influx of climate migrants?
- What is BC's socio-cultural capacity for climate-based migration, and what steps can be taken to ensure an inclusive response to mass migration?

After reviewing the survey results and identifying key themes and missing elements, we developed an interview questionnaire for key-informants, who had been recommended to us by participants and known experts in the field. We then conducted 10 key-informant interviews. Participants worked in the areas of housing, health, law, government and the non-governmental sector.

The remainder of the paper uses these survey and key-informant interview results to dissect the complex dynamics of migration and illuminates how climate change impacts can influence these dynamics. It then turns to key environmental events and their impact on human mobility, and to changing public perceptions of immigration in Canada. It concludes with a short discussion of policy recommendations for all levels of government.

The following key findings emerged from the surveys and interviews conducted as part of our research for this paper.

1. Despite Canada’s historical emissions, no one is initiating or leading a conversation on prospective climate migration. We are too narrowly focused on more immediate local issues, which places the challenge of climate-influenced migration in a policy vacuum.

“The public appetite for thinking about the implications of climate change is very shallow because it always seems like dealing with the next day is more important than dealing with other things.”

“Climate change is not confined within state borders.”

Greenhouse gas emissions are not confined within state borders. Rather, their effects are truly global yet uneven. Some participants commented on the inability of both the federal and provincial governments to take responsibility for the global impacts of our emissions. They went on to explain that government priorities are almost always local. Where governments do take action to address climate change, it is usually focused on adapting locally.

Some participants also commented that long-term, future-oriented problems—like climate change—are neglected in favour of more immediate needs. These participants suggested that governments are not effectively planning for challenges we inevitably face but that will especially affect future generations. It appears that no one at any level of government is stepping up to initiate or lead a conversation on climate change and its impacts on migration, which leaves any conceptualization of these challenges in a policy vacuum.

2. Immigration and refugee policy and practice are not currently designed to accommodate the underlying role of climate change and its impacts on migration.

“Climate change does not bring on new [phenomena]—it exacerbates existing conditions.”

“Right now the famine in South Sudan and Ethiopia is being played kind of like a famine story but, if you look beyond what’s causing the famine, the crop failures and these huge variations in temperature... And then if you play that out further, well, it’s really about climate but it gets played as a famine story.”

“Clients don’t talk about climate factors. They don’t ask directly whether they are pushed out by climate factors—they don’t track intake.”

Many of our study participants commented that the current federal government is not prioritizing climate targets and instead appears committed to stalling on action to address climate change. This is best illustrated by its decision to back out of the Kyoto protocol—the first and only international binding agreement on reducing GHG emissions—and in expanding Alberta tar sands oil, whose associated emissions will contribute to further global warming.

It is no surprise then that little recognition and attention are given to the “second order” effects of climate change, such as the toll it takes on lives and livelihoods. As seen in the above quotes, participants emphasized that the indirect impacts of climate change, like migration, are rarely identified—even by migrants and social-service providers themselves. The pace of climate change also often obscures it from public view; gradual impacts trigger less alarm than those that are sudden. The result is that the role of climate change in social phenomena, like migration, is given less attention than it deserves.

Many of our study participants commented that the current federal government is not prioritizing climate targets and instead appears committed to stalling on action to address climate change.

3. Current immigration policies stack the odds against the most vulnerable people.

“The system isn’t geared for vulnerable populations. Period.”

“These people want to get away and the only places they want to get to are the very places that don’t want them.”

Participants emphasized that Canadian immigration policies are not welcoming of the most vulnerable people, exposing a core justice breakdown at the root of our immigration system. Rather, developed nations like Canada seek to attract educated and economically attractive migrants. Not only are refugees framed negatively in public discourse, they are also prevented from entering Canada in at least two ways. First, “irregular” migrants (such as those who arrive in Canada and then claim asylum) are prevented from landing in Canada through the interdiction practices mentioned earlier. One participant described Canada as “one of the world leaders on how to interdict refugees.” Second, fewer “regular” refugees are being admitted, and more economic-class immigrants are welcomed instead.³⁶

However, as one participant mentioned, migration might help vulnerable countries adapt to adverse consequences of climate change in some ways. Many immigrants send remittance payments to support family members left behind. And immigrants can also advocate in their adopted country for support for the country they left. One participant stated: “People have pride for their home country. If something happens in their hometown, they will advocate for their family and friends.” This dynamic likely played a role in how Canada responded to recent humanitarian emergencies, such as the Haitian earthquake and the floods in Pakistan.

4. Canadian immigration policies draw a false distinction between the “good” migrant and the “bad” migrant.

“For five to seven years, people who make policy and implement policy around immigration have been heightening the cleavage between the good and the bad refugee—the good immigrant and the bad immigrant. The result is that the good vulnerable person gets the photo opportunity and the bad vulnerable person is pilloried.”

Some participants observed that in recent years public discourse around migration has been reduced to a dichotomy between “good” and “bad” migrants. In one form of this dichotomy, the “good” migrants are those who apply for immigration through official channels and the “bad” are those who arrive on our shores seeking asylum. A recent illustration of this framing, which some participants raised, was the 2010 interception off the BC coast of the cargo ship MV Sun Sea, bearing 492 Sri Lankan asylum seekers, most of whom were consequently held in detention facilities for up to two years. One participant questioned whether the framing of this group as a security threat affected due process and if the rights of those genuinely seeking asylum in Canada were undermined.

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³⁶ According to the 2012 Immigration Levels Plan, Canada sought to admit 240,000 to 265,000 immigrants. That total admissions target was the same in 2007, but the mix of immigrant classes has changed over time: now fewer protected persons (like refugees) and family-class immigrants are admitted in favour of more educated economic-class immigrants. Refugees were to account for just under 10 per cent of immigrants to Canada in 2012 ; 61.6 per cent of immigrants were to be economic class.

5. More migrants will require affordable housing and enhanced settlement services.

“These issues are not dealt with enough. And in all seriousness, we have a homelessness situation here.”

“Those struggling now to make ends meet will be most impacted by the effects of climate change.”

Some participants emphasized that greater migration due to climate change would exacerbate the existing housing crisis. That crisis is felt particularly in Vancouver, where housing costs are unaffordable for many. The entry into the city of more migrants with housing needs will compound existing challenges. While we have seen some modest attempts by the governments of BC and Vancouver to fill the housing gaps in recent years, deficiencies remain. Even the projected increases in the lead up to the 2010 Olympics were not realized in their entirety, and social and low-income housing remains in short supply.³⁷

Further, some participants stressed that the kind of affordable housing strategies being implemented do not address the specific needs of some migrant groups. Some of those groups live in large families, which affordable housing often is not designed to accommodate. And that housing is not always close to the services and public transportation many migrants depend upon. Participants were also concerned that only permanent migrants are eligible to receive affordable-housing support in BC. In recent years, more temporary foreign workers have been admitted to Canada, but housing support services are not extended to them.

“There are not enough shelters for newcomers. BC housing or rental [assistance] programs are not designed with their needs in mind.”

“The cost and availability of housing is a concern. Employment is at times difficult to find. This is further limited by long citizenship and immigration processing times.”

Participants also stressed the need for greater integration in the delivery of services to immigrants and refugees. While settlement counselling and health services are both available, participants reported that immigrants and refugees could benefit from better co-ordination of those services. Moreover, many remarked that the addition of more support services such as affordable childcare could help people access existing services, like ESL classes that would allow them to find employment and contribute more fully to life in Canada. Further, many participants commented on existing barriers that limit access to basic medical and mental health services, particularly for refugees who have experienced trauma, and some mentioned that their clients would benefit from greater access to free legal services. Underlying these barriers is the reality that throughout many sectors, including housing, health care and education, there is not sufficient infrastructure to respond and adapt to a surge in migration beyond what is typically expected. Put simply, these key areas have not incorporated prospective climate-influenced migration into their mid- to long-term planning.

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³⁷ S. Klein and L. Copas. *Unpacking the Housing Numbers*. (Vancouver: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives—BC, 2010). At: <http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/unpacking-housing-numbers>.

6. Service-provider organizations are already stretched thin.

“I could help my clients better meet their needs if I had more time to spend with each.”

Many participants from service-provider organizations reported that they are working at full capacity. They observed that increased numbers of migrants would only further strain a system that is already overloaded. These participants expressed that their organizations work hard to satisfy the demand for their services but they always feel that they face time and resource constraints. Some stated that they wished they had more time to spend with each client but found the high caseloads very challenging. Many suggested that, in order to increase capacity and better serve people seeking services, more funding would be required to hire more staff, extend part-time hours of existing staff members and provide ongoing training for employees. Some also reported a lack of funding to provide outreach services to particularly vulnerable migrants.

Climate change and Canada's immigration policies

CANADA IS ALSO WITNESSING THE IMPACTS OF climate change in the form of floods and drought, extremes of heat and cold and the devastation wrought by the mountain pine beetle in BC, among others. The human consequences of climate change have so far been minimized due to more robust infrastructure and adaptive capacity. That said, multi-billion-dollar disasters such as 2013's Calgary floods demonstrate similar income dynamics, where some households are insured for private matters and others are not, while governments are on the hook for repairs to public infrastructure.

Canada has among the highest per-capita emissions in the world and an industrial strategy rooted in the extraction and export of fossil fuels. Canada's share of global, historical GHG emissions is 2.1 per cent; it has a much smaller share of world population, less than 0.5 per cent in 2012.³⁸ Canada has gained from both the use of fossil fuels in its economic development and the consumption of fossil fuels to provide energy services to households.

There are several different components of climate justice, including causal responsibility, equal entitlement to emit, protection of the most vulnerable, equal burden sharing and procedural justice.³⁹ Most of these are relevant to the conversation about climate-induced migration in Canada; however, especially pressing is the noted fact that Canada has done more than most to cause the problem yet is not paying any compensation. Additionally, advanced countries, including Canada, are capable of reducing GHG emissions and funding adaptation programs like adaptive migration schemes.

However, using individual nations as the unit of analysis when looking at these issues masks differences within countries. Higher-income households in every nation have larger carbon footprints than low-income households, and higher income increases both adaptive capacity and access to migration. The poorest (including countries in the Global South as well as disadvantaged populations in advanced countries) not only face more serious consequences but also fundamentally lack

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38 World population from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_population. Canadian population from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/demo02a-eng.htm>. Historical GHG data from: http://pdf.wri.org/navigating_numbers_chapter6.pdf.

39 S. Klinsky and H. Dowlatabadi. 2009. Conceptualizations of justice in climate policy. *Climate Policy* 9(2009):88–108. dCoLi:11M0.A3T76E3/PcpOoLI.I2C00Y8.0583 Earthscan. ISSN: 1469–3062 (print), 1752–7457 (online).

the resources to adapt. This may in turn lead perverse migration outcomes, where the only people able to relocate to Canada will be the wealthy and privileged few.

As a country, Canada's history is one of extensive immigration since colonial settlement (the flip side of which is massive displacement of native populations). In its early colonial years, immigration into Canada was essentially unlimited from a policy perspective—limits were posed by the ability of people to get to Canada aboard ships, and Canada gave away (native) land to those who could homestead in order to induce immigration. Interestingly, many earlier settlers to Canada were themselves fleeing tyranny, poverty or crisis in their own homelands.

Canada admits about 250,000 immigrants of all classes per year, an amount that has changed little since the early 1990s.⁴⁰ New permanent residents span three major categories: family class (spouses and other family of Canadian citizens and permanent residents), economic immigrants (workers and business immigrants), and refugees. The number of refugees has dropped from more than 50,000 in each of 1991 and 1992 to fewer than 25,000 per year since 2008. As a share of the total, refugees have fallen from a high of 23 per cent in 1991 to 9 per cent in 2012. In contrast, about two-thirds of immigrants are now from the economic immigrant category. Most of these are skilled workers and their families, while another group includes "investor" immigrants and their families.

Canada has a reputation for being open to immigrants, and it enjoys a diverse and multicultural society. However, Canada's historical openness to immigrants has also been marred by racist policies with respect to Asian immigration and bigoted efforts to restrict refugees.

This shift in Canada's immigration policies along class lines suggests easier entry for climate migrants who have above-average wealth and/or skills of use to the Canadian economy. Meanwhile, in place of immigration opportunities for poor and unskilled people, Canada has increased the number of temporary workers permitted into the country for a short duration as low-wage labour. While immigration (permanent resident) numbers have stagnated, temporary foreign workers numbered almost half a million at the end of 2012, about double the number in 2006 (also double the number of new permanent residents in 2012).

There are three existing areas of Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) that can accommodate climate migrants. First, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada may temporarily suspend removal orders for people who become displaced while in Canada, such as was done with respect to Haitian visitors following the earthquake; this power could be used more extensively in the future following climate disasters.

Second, climate migrants requiring assistance could utilize section 25 of the IRPA, which grants permanent residency on "humanitarian and compassionate grounds." Generally, residency is granted to applicants who would face "unusual and undeserved" or disproportionate hardship if they were to return to their country of origin. While applications are generally reserved for individuals who have already found their way to Canada, the Minister "may" make a determination on applications originating outside of Canada. The Minister should extend this category to applicants outside of Canada in compelling circumstances.

Third, refugees situated outside of Canada may apply to immigrate if sponsored by certain private groups (sponsorship agreement holders, "groups of five" and community sponsors). This avenue of refugee immigration from outside Canada has often been described as more "legitimate" than a refugee application made from inside Canada. Regulations passed in 2012 have limited this avenue however, by placing further restrictions on who can be sponsored. Those restrictions should be eased. Private group sponsorship allows for a relatively deliberate and supportive refugee process that could properly respond to the circumstances of some climate migrants.

⁴⁰ Data from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Facts and figures 2012—Immigration overview: Permanent and temporary residents: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2012/index.asp>.

While there is scope for climate migrants to be accepted under this existing framework of law, greater clarity and certainty could be provided by creating a new immigration class of “climate migrant” along with targets and programs to ensure Canada lives up to its moral responsibilities. A potentially larger challenge is rallying public opinion and support for those climate migrants.

Canada has a reputation for being open to immigrants, and it enjoys a diverse and multicultural society. However, Canada’s historical openness to immigrants has also been marred by racist policies with respect to Asian immigration (e.g. the Chinese head tax and the “Chinese Exclusion Act”) and bigoted efforts to restrict refugees, including reluctance to admit Jewish refugees during the Second World War and public outrage and resentment toward Asian refugees in recent times. In the Lower Mainland of BC there are ongoing racial tensions in neighbourhoods with shifting demographic profiles.⁴¹ In particular, animosity toward Chinese migrants erupts in debates about local housing markets and residential developments in middle and upper-middle class neighbourhoods.

In BC, these less-welcoming attitudes were evident with the arrival in 1999 of almost 600 undocumented migrants from Fujian Province in China.⁴² Four boats arrived on the west coast of Vancouver Island in a nine-week period, and the passengers from the second boat onwards were detained en masse for the first time in recent Canadian history. Of the 599 migrants, 549 made refugee claims, but only 24 were granted refugee status and the rest were deported in 2000.⁴³ A crackdown on immigration followed, accompanied by a public outcry against the migrants, including “‘racialized and criminalized’ representations of the migrants in the mainstream media, where they were positioned as ‘queue jumpers’ perceived to have cut to the front of an imaginary line and even scripted as ‘bogus refugees’.”⁴⁴ These immigrants and refugees became media scapegoats for some Canadians’ broader concerns about globalization and social and economic change.

Not only have irregular migrants been treated as a threat to national security when they arrive unexpectedly, they have also been actively prevented from coming to Canada in the first place. In May 2012, for instance, at least 148 Sri Lankans were arrested in the African Republic of Benin where they were preparing to board a ship destined for Canada. Together, the governments of Canada and Sri Lanka worked to interdict the group in Benin before they were able to make the journey to Canadian shores.⁴⁵

As these examples show, Canada’s treatment of migrants is inconsistent and appears to be tied to stereotypical depictions of migrants as “worthy” or “unworthy.” Acceptance of migrants in the wake of natural disasters is viewed differently than migrants who arrive on Canadian shores under less-clear circumstances. Thus, the manner in which migrants are characterized within public discourse has real implications for our immigration policies, including with respect to migration fuelled by climate change. If we recognize our involvement in contributing to climate change by

If we recognize our involvement in contributing to climate change by our consumption patterns over past decades, then we can take steps to ameliorate those impacts by accepting more migrants who are affected by our enormous carbon footprint while we take steps to reduce this footprint.

41 J. Rose. 2001. Contexts of interpretation: Assessing immigration reception in Richmond, Canada. *Canadian Geographer* 45(4):474–493.

42 S. Hier and J. Greenberg. 2002. Constructing a discursive crisis: Risk, problematization and illegal Chinese in Canada. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25(3):490–513; J. Greenberg. 2000. Opinion discourse and Canadian newspapers: The case of the Chinese “boat people.” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 25:517–537; A. Mountz. 2004. Embodying the nation-state: Canada’s response to human smuggling. *Political Geography* 23:323–345.

43 Mountz 2004.

44 Mountz 2004; Hier & Greenberg 2002.

45 Chase, Steven. June 14, 2012. Ottawa helps block another batch of smuggled Sri Lankans. *Globe and Mail*. At: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-notebook/ottawa-helps-block-another-batch-of-smuggled-sri-lankans/article4261733/>.

our consumption patterns over past decades, then we can take steps to ameliorate those impacts by accepting more migrants who are affected by our enormous carbon footprint while we take steps to reduce this footprint.

Finally, it is worth noting that even those who successfully obtain refugee status in Canada face systemic barriers. For instance, a new law—spurred on by the arrival of Tamil migrants on the MV Ocean Lady in 2009 and on the MV Sun Sea in 2010—detains and, ultimately, penalizes migrants seeking asylum.⁴⁶ Recently, the federal government drastically reduced health benefits previously offered to some refugees with the hope that it will “deter bogus refugees from abusing Canada’s generosity.”⁴⁷ Even within communities where public opinion is overwhelmingly accepting of immigration, immigrant experiences are not always positive.⁴⁸ Some immigrants, for example, report experiencing forms of social exclusion and disadvantage.⁴⁹ Further, funding cuts in recent decades have limited access for migrants and refugees to services such as education, welfare and health care.⁵⁰

With many service-provider organizations reporting they are already working at full capacity, obviously increased numbers of migrants would only further strain a system that is already overloaded.

These practices also remove more educated persons from the very countries that need them most, thereby further eroding the coping capacity of the poorer regions that will inevitably be left to receive the bulk of climate migrants. Migration might help vulnerable countries adapt to adverse consequences of climate change in some ways, as many immigrants send remittance payments to support family members left behind and can advocate on behalf of the country they left.

Services to existing immigrants and refugees are also inadequate. While settlement counselling and health services are both available, immigrants and refugees could benefit from better coordination of those services and access to other services including legal, housing and education. With many service-provider organizations reporting they are already working at full capacity, obviously increased numbers of migrants would only further strain a system that is already overloaded. If migration were to increase, more funding would be required to hire more staff, extend part-time hours of existing staff members, and provide ongoing training for employees.

46 Refugee claimants who are designated by the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism as “irregular arrivals” face a restrictive detention regime. According to a statement from the Human Rights Research and Education Centre at the University of Ottawa, the mandatory detention provision, set out in the Protecting Canada’s Immigration System Act, requires the detention of people aged 16 years and over who arrive as part of a group. They have a right of review within 14 days, but if they are not released they will remain in detention for six months before a second review. Failed claimants arriving from “designated countries of origin” (safe countries considered unlikely to produce refugees) will not have the right to appeal the decision and cannot apply for a work permit while in Canada.

47 Previously, the Interim Federal Health Program covered all refugees under a single class of health insurance. As of June 30, 2012, however, certain categories of refugees are denied coverage for vision care, dental care and many prescription drugs. For instance, refugee claimants from “designated countries of origin” are eligible for health care only if they are considered a public-health risk and claimants in that category are denied health care unless it is considered “urgent or essential.” For more information see: Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Interim Federal Health Program: Summary of Benefits. Accessed from: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/outside/summary-ifhp.asp> and <http://www.cfp.ca/content/59/6/605.full#sec-1>.

48 Rose, J., 2001. Contexts of interpretation: Assessing immigration reception in Richmond, Canada. *The Canadian Geographer*, 45(4), pp.474-493.

49 R. Danso. 2001. From “there” to “here”: An investigation of the initial settlement experiences of Ethiopian and Somali refugees in Toronto. *GeoJournal* 55:3-14.

50 M. Stewart et al. 2008. Multicultural meanings of social support among immigrants and refugees. *International Immigration* 46(3):123-159.

Moving the conversation forward

CLIMATE CHANGE POSES CHALLENGING QUESTIONS of fairness and social justice for developed nations such as Canada. Will we leave more vulnerable populations that have often benefitted little from historic GHG production to bear much of the impact of climate change, or will we recognize the injustice in the current distribution of risks and benefits and increase our contribution to building the global adaptive capacity needed to address these impacts?

At present there appears to be little interest from Canadian governments at any level to address one large potential societal impact of climate change: forced migration. The phenomenon is not being tracked and is not much discussed. But it is logical that as climate change progresses it will become a more prominent driver of migration, and some of those migrants will seek to come to the relative “oasis” of Canada and BC. The federal government must consider what its response to that need will be, and governments at all levels, as well as social-service providers, need to consider how they will address the needs of an influx of climate migrants.

Migration will be best managed by utilizing a well-planned, comprehensive and co-operative approach that facilitates the movement of people both within and beyond borders. Locally, urban housing development, education and health services planning will need to consider accommodation of additional refugees. Federally, Canada’s immigration policies should be reformed to create a new category of immigration status for climate migrants. This will require rethinking traditional immigrant and refugee classifications to reflect evolving migration dynamics, including the ways in which climate change is already influencing global migration patterns. Canada could also lead an international conversation about dealing with and defining migrants who are displaced in significant part by climate change.

Canada should also invest more in justice-oriented, collaborative climate-change adaptation strategies in vulnerable regions, while recognizing the limits of foreign funded programming. Canada owes a “climate debt” to the nations bearing the greatest impacts, and it will have to substantially increase its financial and other support to the developing countries that now bear the burden of

Migration will be best managed by utilizing a well-planned, comprehensive and co-operative approach that facilitates the movement of people both within and beyond borders.

climate change. This is not a matter of charity or generosity but one of justice and reparation.⁵¹ This sentiment was codified in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP-19) agreement in Warsaw (known as the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage), designed to commit wealthy nations to provide expertise and financial support for countries affected by extreme climate events. Given that most climate migrants will remain in poorer countries, Canada must increase its aid to those regions with the goal of strengthening local capacity to settle those displaced.

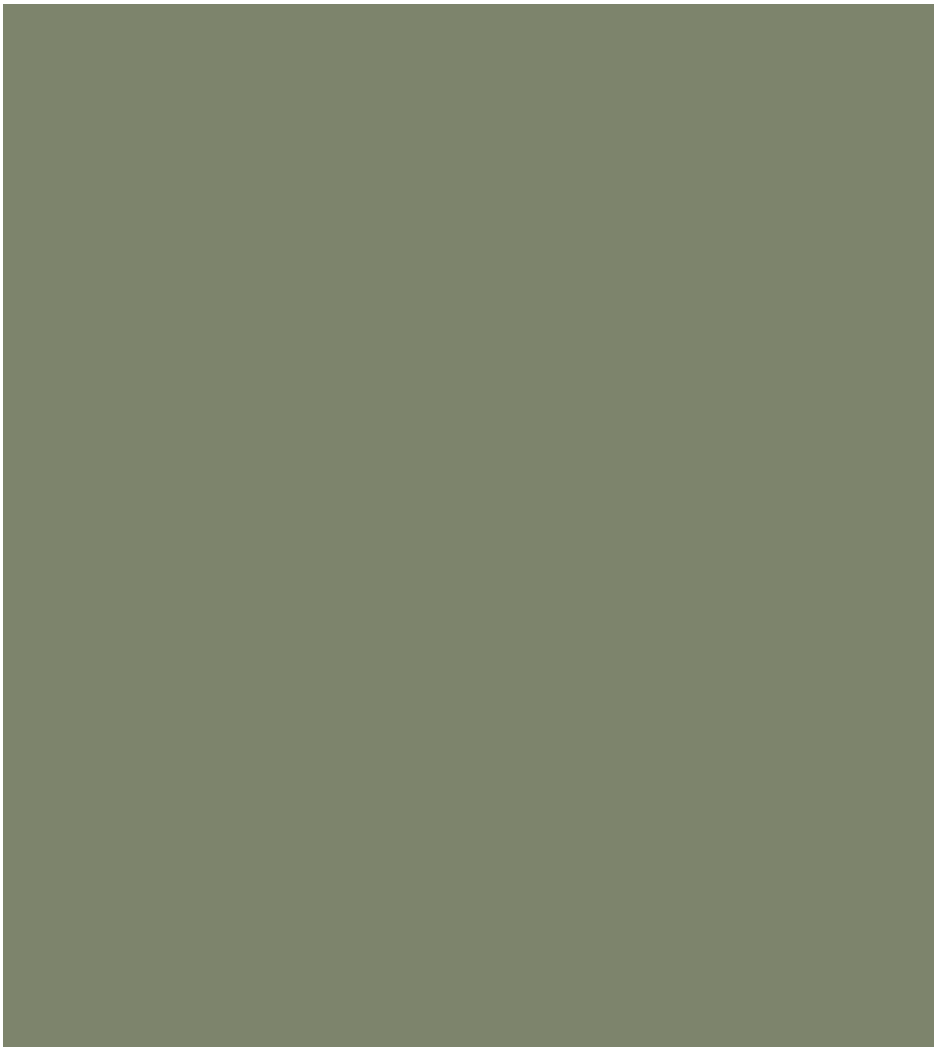
In this context, Canada could extend funding for services to new immigrants and refugees and, in particular, extend funding for outreach and settlement services for the most vulnerable. This must be accompanied by an evidence-based assessment of surge capacity in health and human services at the community level throughout the country, like the ability for these services to respond to a rapid increase in demand following a disaster. Similarly, efforts should be made to track the number of new immigrants and refugees for whom environmental factors are major motivators for their migration.

Canada owes a “climate debt” to the nations bearing the greatest impacts, and it will have to substantially increase its financial and other support to the developing countries that now bear the burden of climate change.

Sound immigration policies and settlement services need to be based on reliable data. This would enable local and provincial governments to plan for the likely new demand for more affordable housing created by increased lower-income migrants and to better integrate services for new immigrants.

We find that Canadian society is not culturally prepared for these potential immigration challenges. Most importantly, we need our governments to lead this important conversation. If an ugly cultural backlash is to be avoided, leaders must be heard and seen explaining these issues to the public—outlining why climate migration is inevitable, explaining why Canada carries a special responsibility to help accommodate climate migrants, reassuring the public that all levels of government are taking steps to address these issues and inviting society as a whole to undertake this ethical responsibility together.

51 Naomi Klein. November 11, 2009. Climate rage. *Rolling Stone*. At: <http://www.naomiklein.org/articles/2009/11/climate-rage>.



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