

**ISIS Senior Immigrants Needs and Assets Assessment**  
**March 2010**

## About ISIS

**ISIS' mission is to welcome immigrants and to work in partnership to offer services and create opportunities that enable them to participate fully in Canadian life.**

ISIS is the leading deliverer of settlement services in Atlantic Canada and provides the full range of programs and services to 3,500+ immigrant clients annually in 34 communities across Nova Scotia. ISIS is also the primary contact in Nova Scotia on refugee, settlement and immigration issues for 2,000+ organizations, employers, government departments and individuals annually.

ISIS was created by the merger of Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre (HILC) and Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) on December 1, 2009. After many years of close collaboration, the two organizations combined to develop their growing synergy, better integrate services and create a more holistic approach for clients.

With over 115 staff members from over thirty countries of origin, ISIS is the largest immigrant-serving agency in Atlantic Canada. ISIS' staff is dedicated, diverse, highly professional, qualified and experienced in their field. More than 80% of the staff have lived and worked internationally as well as in Canada, adding a wealth of cross-cultural understanding and competence.

Working with numerous partners, ISIS serves clients with a clear focus on the goal of social and economic integration. Programs and services range from refugee resettlement to business counselling, from literacy-level English language training to integrated language and pre-employment programs for specific professions. As well as offering direct, client-centred services, ISIS works to create a truly welcoming community. Over 450 trained and active volunteers assist staff in keeping ISIS firmly linked with business, community groups, other service agencies and former clients.

## **Acknowledgments**

ISIS would like to thank Citizenship and Immigration Canada for making it possible for us to look into the needs and assets of senior immigrants in Halifax at this time, when we can plan, prepare and build relationships to help us better serve this growing group of immigrants.

Meta Research and Communications - Barbara Cottrell, donalee Moulton and Maha Amin - worked hard on this project, always showing patience, respect and genuine interest in the work.

We appreciate the participation of all the immigrants in the interviews and focus groups, sharing their thoughts and experiences openly.

Special thanks go to the members of the Advisory Group who provided insight and direction to this work. Their interest, professionalism and willingness to work collaboratively mean that we have many partners as we continue to address the issues identified here.

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## Executive Summary

### Background

From October 2009 to February 2010, Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS) conducted a Needs and Assets Assessment of senior immigrants ages 55 years and over in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). This project was funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and carried out by Meta Research and Communications.

Data from the 2006 census show that 85% of all foreign-born residents in Nova Scotia arrived before 2001. These people are no longer newcomers, but have settled and made their homes here. 91% of immigrants to Nova Scotia arrived when they were under 45 years of age, so many of them have now become seniors and/or have sponsored their parents to join them. It is to be expected that as immigrant communities settle and grow in numbers, the percentage of seniors increases both through natural aging and through increased sponsorship of older parents. As well, many immigrants come from traditional cultures where the family is close and supportive, and the role of seniors is an important issue for families.

At the same time, the role of seniors is gaining increasing importance for the wider community in Canada as well. As the country faces more labour shortages and the population continues to age, the roles of seniors and senior immigrants become more and more essential to our society.

Over the past few years, the number of immigrant seniors coming to ISIS has increased – from 49 clients in 2005 to 68 clients in 2008. Given this trend, ISIS wanted to better understand the settlement process as experienced by senior immigrants. This project set out to address the following questions:

- What supports have senior immigrants found useful in settling in Nova Scotia?
- What challenges do senior immigrants face?

### Methodology

The research was guided by an Advisory Committee made up of many mainstream service providers who work with seniors, staff from both municipal and provincial government and other interested stakeholders.

The project consisted of a combination of

- 12 individual interviews with seniors immigrants and with family members
- 4 focus groups with seniors immigrants and with family members
- Best practices research in six cities across Canada
- A survey of 14 service providers who work with seniors in the HRM

Reaching out to seniors is always a challenge, both for offering services and for engaging them in research. Forty-one senior immigrants participated in three focus groups and nine interviews. They were asked about their settlement experience, the successes and the challenges they had had, what programs they had used, if those programs met their needs, and if there were other

programs they thought would help senior immigrants settle into the community. Thirteen family members participated in one focus group and three interviews. The family members were asked to discuss their experience of having a senior member in HRM, and to give their views of the seniors' experiences.

Researchers did a national scan of six cities comparable to Halifax in size to discover if any of them have services specific to immigrant seniors. Locally, a survey of fourteen service providers was conducted to ascertain what services for senior immigrants are available in HRM, the challenges they faced in providing these services, and for their suggestions for ways to overcome the challenges.

## Findings

The majority of senior participants found living in HRM a positive experience because they believe it is a safe and friendly city, but many experienced challenges that made it difficult for them to settle in HRM. Generally, family members appreciated having senior family members with them, but they, too, experienced challenges. Some said it was difficult because the senior required so much of their time and attention. The most frequently identified challenges were: economic insecurity and the lack of employment opportunities, problems with health care, language, weather, transportation, isolation, and civic navigation. These challenges tend to be inter-related and combine to increase seniors' social isolation.

While there are programs available to seniors, such as those provided by ISIS, Spencer House, the Community Links Association, and the YMCA, many immigrant seniors do not access them. The main barriers to access are lack of awareness, difficulties around transportation and low level English language skills. Inability to access services contributes to the sense of isolation. Family members also identified their own stress as a major issue, as they experience being the "sandwich generation", taking care of their parents and their children at the same time.

Service providers noted that many of the issues identified in this study are also the issues faced by mainstream Canadian seniors. They found the Advisory committee meetings a good opportunity to learn more about each other and stated that they would like to see more coordination of programs, and increased knowledge and information sharing. They also requested cross-cultural awareness training so that they can better help immigrant seniors participate in their programs and services.

## Recommendations

Many ideas and suggestions were put forward by all the groups who participated in this study. These have been grouped into six major recommendations:

- 1. Increase collaboration among service providers**
- 2. Provide more and clearer information for immigrant seniors**
- 3. Provide more opportunities for language support**
- 4. Address issues of economic insecurity for immigrant seniors.**
- 5. Improve access to recreation and networking activities.**
- 6. Improve and increase transportation options.**

## Methodology

**An Advisory Group** was formed and met three times during the course of the project. Research instruments, including demographic information forms, consent forms, and interview and focus group questions, were designed and approved by the Advisory Group.

ISIS staff and the Advisory Group members referred interview and focus group participants. The researchers also submitted the names of potential participants.

**The project activities** proceeded as follows:

- Nine one-on-one interviews and three focus groups were held with senior immigrants
- Three interviews and one focus group were held with family members of senior immigrants.

Participants were invited to fill out a demographic information sheet (see Appendix 1). In the interviews and focus groups they were asked about their settlement experience, the successes and the challenges they have had, what programs they have used, if those programs met their needs, and if there are other programs they think would help senior immigrants settle into the community.

**Interpreters** assisted the researchers in both individual interviews and focus groups.

**Workshops for service providers and immigrants** were held on February 3 and 10, 2010 at ISIS to report on and discuss the findings. The workshops were both well-attended and well-received. Service providers expressed an interest in continuing to work with ISIS to address the needs of senior immigrants. The immigrant community members, many of whom used interpreters during the workshop, expressed appreciation to ISIS for undertaking the study and for providing an opportunity to discuss the findings. This set of workshops was clearly an important part of the process.

## Benefits of the project design

Several elements of the original project design were very useful:

### 1. An appropriate and engaged Advisory Group

The advisory group provided valuable advice and direction during the project. Perhaps even more important, they proved to be key contacts for the next steps: willing and able to continue to work with ISIS on the implications of the findings of this study.

### 2. Planning for interpretation

Both the project design and budget included interpretation services and thus enabled the participation of some of the most vulnerable seniors.

### 3. Reporting back to the community

The two workshop sessions were much appreciated, as noted above. They also confirmed to all the attendees how interested ISIS is in their partnership on this issue, and thus strengthened the networks for ongoing work.

## **Limitations and questions re: design**

It is important to note the following limitations experienced during this project:

### **1. How representative was the group of participants?**

Given the challenges discussed in this report, it is not surprising that it is hard to contact immigrant seniors and to know who and where they are. While there was a good *number* of participants, it is not clear how representative they are of the larger senior immigrant population.

### **2. What is the most appropriate definition of “senior”?**

Another issue to consider is the definition of “senior”. ISIS staff had observed that many newcomers, especially Government Assisted Refugees, have aged through their difficult life experiences and are facing issues associated with being seniors even if they have not reached the usual minimum age. For this reason, this study defined seniors as anyone over 55 years. This meant that the participants represented a large age span – over twenty years – and so were a more diverse group in almost every aspect of their lives.

### **3. Incomplete data on immigration category**

Immigrants are often not sure what their official immigrant category was or is. This was reflected in the fact that several participants in this study were unable to answer that question.

It would have been helpful to ascertain the category in order to be able to better understand the role of this factor. As it is, the findings were surprising in that few people identified themselves as family sponsored, which is in general the main category under which seniors can enter Canada.

### **4. Selection of family members**

In hindsight, it would have been good to make an effort to interview the family members of the specific seniors who were interviewed and to match some of their responses. In the recruitment of participants for this project, the invitation went out generally to family members of senior immigrants and they were not necessarily connected with the seniors who were interviewed.

On the whole, the differing needs of those interviewed mean that this study cannot discriminate between groups or draw conclusions based on types.

## The Participants

### Senior Immigrants

A total of 41 seniors participated in three focus groups and nine interviews. 40/41 seniors completed demographic information sheets. 22 were females and 18 males.

#### Age

54-64 years	65-75 years	75+ years
30	7	3

#### Countries of Origin

The participants represented 21 countries of origin and a variety of cultures:

Afghanistan, Argentina, Bhutan, Bosnia, China, Colombia, Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Iran, Japan, Kosovo, Kuwait, Lebanon, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Poland, South Korea, Sudan, United States.

#### Immigration class

Provincial Nominee	Skilled Worker	Family Class	Business Class	Govt Assisted Refugee	Privately Sponsored Refugee
14	4	4	2	10	1

Six participants either did not know their immigration class or did not respond to this question, a situation which is not unusual, but is of concern in that sometimes this has an impact on their circumstances.

#### Ability

Thirty-two participants said they did not have a disability. Among the others, eye problems were the only common health issue, mentioned by four people.

#### Time in Canada

The following table shows the length of time participants had lived in Canada. Again, the group was quite diverse, and this lends more weight to their comments:

Less than 1 yr	1-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	10+ yrs	No Answer
9	17	2	9	4/41

**Source of Income**

Thirty-one participants were unemployed; eight were working; two did not respond to this question. The nature of work stated were: YMCA Recruitment Consultant; teacher; cabinet maker; environmental design consultant; at MacDonald's; self employed.

The participants' main sources of income were as follows:

Self	Family	Government	Self + Family	No Answer
19	4	14	3	1/41

**Supports**

Six participants lived alone; 34 lived with a partner and/or other family members. Twenty-three have close friends in HRM; 16 did not. Fifteen participants said they would turn to family if they needed support; 16 said they would turn to a friend; two would turn to ISIS. One person did not have anyone to turn to and seven did not answer this question.

Seventeen participants either did not attend meetings or belong to any cultural or religious groups, or did not answer this question. Fourteen participants belonged to or attended meetings of the following cultural or religious groups:

- African Diaspora Association of the Maritimes (ADAM)
- Buddhist community
- Church
- Filipino Association of Nova Scotia
- Haseeb Alrasoul group
- Hindu temple.
- Mosque
- Polish church in Dartmouth
- Polish community
- Religious group
- United African Canadian Women's Association (UACWA)

## Family Member Participants

A total of 13 family members participated in one focus group and three interviews. 12/13 family members completed demographic information sheets. Six were females and six males.

### Age

54-64 years	65-75 years	75+ years
6	4	2

### Countries of Origin

The participants' countries of origin were:

Afganistán, Bhutan, Bosnia, China, Colombia, Iran, Korea, Kosovo, Palestine, Poland

### Immigration class

Provincial Nominee	Family Class	Business Class	Govt Assisted Refugee	Privately Sponsored Refugee	No ans/ Don't Know
2	2	1	4	1	2/12

### Ability

Six family members said their members did not have a disability. Six had physical disability. One had a physical disability, one had a physical disability and memory problems, and one had eye problems and was a cancer survivor.

### Time in Canada

The following table shows the length of time participants had lived in Canada:

Less than 1 yr	1-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	10+ yrs
3	4	2	3

### Source of Income

Eleven of the family members were not working. One was employed. Three family members said they were financially self-supporting; eight were supported by the Canadian government. One did not respond to this question. The participants' main sources of income were as follows:

Self	Government	No Ans
3	8	1/12

### Supports

Six family members lived with a partner; seven lived with their child(ren) or grandchild. None lived alone.

Five had close friends in HRM, seven did not. For seven, their children were their closest support person. Another family member was the closest support for one, a friend for another.

Seven of the family member participants either did not attend meetings or belong to any cultural or religious groups, or did not answer this question. Four participants belonged to or attended meetings of cultural or religious groups. One attended the mosque and some cultural gatherings if accessible transportation was available; two attend Polish Church in Dartmouth and part of the polish community; and the other attended a Hindu temple.

### **Key**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Symbol</b>
Senior Interview Participants	I 1-9
Senior Focus Groups	FG 1-3
Family Member Interviews	FM 1-3
Family Member Focus Group	FMFG

## Findings

### Living in Halifax

The majority of participants found living in HRM a positive experience because they believe it is a safe and friendly city. One participant said:

*I am here two and a half years. Everything here is good. Life is easier than in China. Clean air, people are nice and friendly, and it is safe, even at night. It's good for seniors to live here" [FG1].*

**The friendliness of Nova Scotians** helped many participants to feel at home here. One person said, "We are not strangers in Halifax" [FG3]. Others agreed: "People are friendly and very gracious. It feels like a small town not a city" [FG2]. One participant said his family chose Halifax "because it is quieter" [FG3]. Another, who had lived in HRM for 10 years said, "I like it here and will spend the rest of my life here. It is safe and friendly. You feel welcome, not like an outsider. It is a good experience" [FG1].

**That it is a safe place for their children, and a place where their children could receive a good education, was important to a number of participants.** One said, "I came here four years ago and have been impressed. My children can study here, and they are safe" [FG1]. That HRM is relative small, peaceful and quiet also made living here a good experience.

**Being able to speak English and receiving help from their own ethnic communities eased settlement in HRM for some.** Having family here, and/or having contacts before they arrived made settlement much easier:

*We already had contacts in other parts of the country and a couple we knew met us at the airport when we arrived. We were privileged here to have people who came before us. I cannot claim I have had the same difficulties I hear about [FG3].*

**Having had a senior relative join them was positive for family members** who said, "It's good to have her here. I would miss her if she wasn't with us" [FM1]; "I sponsored him because I need my family to stay together and I want to see the whole family happy together" [FM3].

**Families felt that their senior relative contributed to their lives.** One said she appreciated the help with childcare. Others felt that it was a very good experience to have her grandparents here because "They help us keep our culture and keep us linked with our [ethnic] community and to the church" [FMFG].

The availability of "good banking and housing", that they could "discuss anything freely (I have rights), to ask and get all the help I need" and "no crowd" [FM2] were also mentioned as positive aspects about living in HRM. Two family members said it was the health care system that made Canada a good place for their relatives to be. One family member explained: "My grandmother would probably have died without her cancer treatment. She did not know she had this disease when she arrived" [FM1]. Another said, "Compared to our country, all health [supports] are available" [FM2].

## Settlement Challenges

Although many participants were positive about living in Canada, adjusting to life here was difficult for some at first. One said that although he came with a group of friends, he and his family felt homesick. Not all participants felt settled here though. One participant said he hated it here and wanted to “go home” [I4]. Another did not feel settled but felt she could not leave because her children are in Canada.

*She has no alternative because we are all here but because of the language and transportation problems I can't say she feels at home [FM2].*

**Some participants said that eventually they adapted to the differences in language, accents, shopping, doctors, etc., and not having any Canadian friends, and now felt part of this society. Others said that if their settlement problems were not resolved they would have to leave the city. For some, these challenges were multiple, and included health issues, loneliness, age, financial problems, and the weather.**

Family members described how these multiple challenges impacted on them:

*...the money she got from old age is not enough to support all her needs. Even the medicine is not all covered for her, we need to pay certain amount. I think we have these challenges because I don't know about the service. Also my language is not that good to understand and know about all that. Transportation is a problem and I need to put more money. Equipment is not covered. I need a chair for her and it is not covered and I can't afford this money. Only small stuff through Red Cross is covered but not the big things [FM2].*

The following are details of settlement challenges in these categories:

- Economic Insecurity and the Lack of Employment Opportunities
- Health Care
- Language
- Weather
- Transportation
- Isolation
- Civic Navigation
- The Challenge for Family Members

## **Economic Insecurity and the Lack of Employment Opportunities**

Economic insecurity, often caused by the lack of suitable employment opportunities for themselves and/or their children, was one of the major challenges to settlement for many of the participants. As one participant said, “The only problem is financing; nothing else ... I feel I can work but I never get hired [I5].”

**Some came to Canada prepared to support themselves** (e.g., the participant who had his own business in Iran and wants to start a business here is prepared to finance himself for one year while he gathers the information he needs), but many did not feel settled, because, as one participant said, “we can’t get work so we can’t get money” [I5].

One participant who faced this challenge said he would like to stay in Halifax: he had been here since 2005 and had kind neighbours and liked the fact that “the air is very clean and it’s not crowded here” but he came through the provincial nominee program when “there were 30 families then [from his country], now there are only 10. The others have moved away because they couldn’t get jobs” [FG1].

These comments reflect the fact that the group interviewed in this study are 55 years and over. Many came under the Provincial Nominee category originally and were selected for their skills and experience, but nevertheless found it difficult to obtain appropriate jobs. As well, in a time of increasing labour shortages, employers are talking about drawing on older workers, but immigrant seniors still face multiple barriers to employment.

**Other senior participants suffer because of the economic insecurity experienced by their children.** It is interesting to note that in the family members group, 66% of respondents are government-supported. One participant was concerned about the employment opportunities for younger people too. Her two children left Nova Scotia because they could not find work here.

**Some immigrant seniors cannot access government supports.** The fact that they were not eligible for Old Age Security caused problems for one participant and her family:

*Halifax is a good place for seniors if you have enough income. It’s expensive here. The difficulty for me is services are for Canadian seniors. Immigrant seniors come through family class and for 10 years you can’t use government services. If you have a problem you can’t get help. The family who is sponsoring us has to take responsibility and that’s a problem for the whole family, not just for the senior who needs help [FG1].*

The length of time one had to be in Canada before being eligible for CPP was a concern for one family member who said, “Things cost so much here, and immigrants have to be here many years before they are eligible for CPP, so they have to get a job to supplement their OAP. This is not good for our relatives” [FMFG].

One consequence of financial difficulties was housing insecurity. One participant said she lived in overcrowded conditions and could not afford her rent: “I am living in a house with the whole family. We want to move to public housing; the rent is very high now, but there is a long list for public housing [FG3].” Another said he applied for a senior’s home three months ago but “I didn’t get in. My income [assistance] is not quite good enough. My rent is expensive.” [FG1].

## Health Care

Health issues were also preventing participants from feeling settled in HRM. This included not only their individual situations, but also access and adjustment to the medical system in Canada.

One of these issues was **finding a doctor**, and this was mentioned numerous times:

*I've been here one year. I like Halifax: the air is clean, the food is good, the summer is beautiful, and people are nice. It's a good place for seniors after retirement but I still haven't found a doctor. Everywhere full, doctors not taking new patients. I haven't had my check up yet [FG1].*

**Interpretation services** are available at the hospitals but not having one assigned interpreter was problematic for some participants. In addition, in a small city the pool of interpreters is not large and maintaining confidentiality is a concern for some. One participant's husband was ill and every time they went to the hospital a new interpreter was assigned to them. This meant she had to "explain her whole life each time and the entire community knows your life [FG3]."

The lack of interpretation services at the level of primary health care was an embarrassment for one participant who said:

*It is bad going to the doctor. There are no interpretation services there. We have to take our son to interpret and it interrupts his work and I don't want my son to go to the doctor with me when I talk about women's problems...Here they don't really communicate with you, don't explain. My son, he tells us you cannot ask questions. You feel very uncomfortable because it is your health. You really need to know what and how you can take care of yourself [FG1].*

Other issues of concern included the emphasis on cure rather than prevention, the length of waiting time at the hospital emergency room and the costs of medication and rehabilitation services. Those who are sponsored by family members may not be eligible for seniors' facilities with medical care and this places a great burden on the family.

## Language

Issues related to language fall into two categories: limitations on daily life in the community and challenges around accessing language training.

### **Limitations on daily life in the community**

Seniors and family members said that limited English means seniors have difficulties accessing services, finding work and navigating the city. Family members are often expected to act as interpreters and this leads to more dependence.

### **Accessing language training**

For some, age, physical limitations and transportation limit their access to language training. There are also issues around eligibility. Some did not access language classes when they first arrived. Now they are retired, they are Canadian citizens and no longer eligible. While there is

now some language training available at ISIS for Canadian citizens, participants were not aware of this.

Once they learned the language, seniors were able to feel settled in Halifax:

*Now my mother knows English it is better and she likes it here. Now she can take the bus and people, even the drivers, are friendly, and they talk to her, and she is looking for a job. In my country, she is old, but here she is young. I will go with her and she will find a job [FMFG].*

## **Weather**

Many participants found the weather “difficult to adjust to” [FG1], especially the cold in winter. One said, “It’s a long winter. One can get very depressed during these months” [FG3]. The winter was particularly difficult for participants who had health problems. One family member said her grandmother doesn’t go out at all in the winter.

## **Transportation**

Transportation was identified as a challenge for seniors by a number of participants and family members, especially if the seniors had disabilities:

*It is hard for us to take her to family doctor or anyplace we need to make arrangement so we need help in that. I don’t have any place to contact to help her in transport and I can’t afford these buses for disabled people [FM2].*

The cost of public transportation was prohibitive for some participants. Others found it difficult to use the bus because of medical problems, or had difficulties because they did not speak or read English, or because “there are no names on the bus stops” and “the buses aren’t on schedule” [FG1].

## **Isolation**

Not surprisingly, isolation was a major issue for many of the participants, even those who live with their family members. Many had chosen to live in Canada with their immediate family members, but missed friends. Some are here without their children or other family members.

Another pointed out that, “If you have children here, they are very busy with their own lives. You can’t depend on them” [FG3].

Seniors also reported that they find it difficult to make Canadian friends, and as a result, many socialize with people from their own communities and lack opportunities to learn about Canadian culture. Not being able to speak English well was identified as one of the reasons the participants had difficulty making friends in Canada.

## **The Challenge for Family Members**

A number of family members found it a challenge to have senior relatives with them in Canada, often because the senior required so much of their time and attention.

*It's hard. I have to take my parents shopping and to the doctor. I don't know what they'd do if I couldn't [FMFG].*

*It's difficult because they are sick and need a doctor's attention but they don't speak English and don't trust doctors, so when there's an emergency they call us [FMFG].*

*It is very difficult having our parents here. They live a way from us and we have little children and others we take to school, and we go to English classes, but we have to go to them right away when they need help [FMFG].*

The stress sometimes affected the entire family:

*He still has his suitcase packed to go back. It's very stressful for [my husband] and for me. Having an older person here affects the whole family, not just the person who comes [FMFG].*

## Services Accessed

Access to services for seniors was clearly identified as a problem. Both seniors themselves and family members said that they were not aware of services for seniors. Both groups also said that language is or would be a barrier to access.

Others had heard of services but did not have time to access them. One participant said, “A lot of time people are busy surviving and don’t have a lot of time” [FG2]. Another reason given for not accessing services was that participants were now Canadian citizens and were no longer eligible.

The most frequently accessed services are detailed below.

### Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS)

A number of participants identified ISIS as a service they had accessed and appreciated. For many, it was their starting point in the community and a helpful resource in their job search. Responses also indicated that many people were not aware of all the services available through ISIS and some had unclear or unrealistic expectations about the role of a settlement agency.

Access Nova Scotia, YMCA, and People Plus were also mentioned as employment services that were accessed.

### The Library

The public library was one of the most frequently mentioned services accessed by participants. It was used by a number as a source of information, as a place “to look for a job” [15], CDs “to help me improving my English” [16]. Participants spoke of the variety of resources for the whole family and of enjoying the place itself and spending time there. Several people said they would like to be able to access more library materials in their first language.

### Other Services Accessed

Other seniors’ programs that were mentioned were:

- YMCA recreation programs, including Elder Aerobics. Participants found the services excellent, but some complained of the cost.
- Seniors’ club at the Bayers Westwood Family Resource Centre, ” where “all kinds of nationalities meet” and the leader is especially helpful

## **Suggested Services**

Both senior and family member participants had many suggestions for ways that could help senior immigrants settle better and feel more at home in Halifax. They said that if these services were in place, both seniors and their families would cope better. In the words of one family member: “We need more care and support” [FM2]. Others agreed. One family member explained:

*My parents are both sick. My father is disabled. We would like to help them, we are very attached to them, but we don't have enough time. And still we don't speak good English. It is very hard. We feel like we're one family all alone. We would be so happy if some organization could help us help them [FMFG].*

Suggestions fell under three categories: ways to improve access to services, ways to build on the assets that immigrant seniors bring and ways to build a more welcoming community.

## **Both seniors and family members are especially concerned about access to services.**

They made repeated mention of three ways to improve this:

- Information about and navigation of services
- Language support through interpretation & translation as well as language training
- Services geared specifically to seniors and/or to immigrant seniors.

### **Information about and navigation of services**

Clearly, immigrant seniors need help to know what services are available and how they can access them.

- Seniors would like to know more about government services, financial services, employment, health services and recreation.
- Some people wanted a person who could accompany them and explain services.
- Cost is also an issue here, and was mentioned with regard to health care services and recreation.

### **Language support through interpretation & translation as well as language training**

- Many people said it would be helpful to have information in their first language, through both translation and interpretation.
- Some requested ESL classes that consider the learning styles of seniors, or that are taught by someone who speaks their first language. ESL classes for citizens were also mentioned again.

### **Services geared specifically to seniors and/or to immigrant seniors**

This suggestion includes the point of training service providers to support immigrant seniors and designing services specifically for them:

- A family member said that “social workers need to be trained to know about diversity, multicultural and immigration. Maybe the policy is there but attitude is important (cultural awareness)”. She also thought that “nurses at Northwood need to be

culturally diverse so they can deal with us same as Canadian” and that “Humanitarians and psychological services are available to Canadian only but for us because of the language it is not available, or we can’t access it “[FM2].

- Some recommended that ISIS gear more of its employment services specifically to seniors
- Many participants requested social or recreation opportunities for immigrant seniors to meet each other and spend time outside their homes. Some also wanted one-to-one social contact and practical support.

### **Many also referred to using “the energy of seniors -- that would be good for society”**

These suggestions took many different forms:

- A regular networking event for seniors to meet other seniors, where they could “get free advice from each other and learn about places to volunteer or do some work”
- A social seniors group where they can talk to each other and learn English at their own pace by talking to each other, and where they can go on bus rides together” [FMFG].
- A seniors’ sports club that “would help us keep in shape, healthy, and reduce the cost of medicare” [FG1]
- An activity centre which included “traveling to learn about the history and culture here. We could pay to go, but we need someone to organize it” [FG1]
- A place where immigrants could share their experiences: “We have a lot to share vis a vis the differences we have raising kids in this culture whether it is the social worker or the school. Schools think the problems arise because kids are from a different culture. This is a stereotypical view. It is not necessarily true. A group would help to deal with a lot of stresses” [FG3]
- A once-weekly “seniors get together and take them to a movie, shopping – something fun” [FG3]

### **Others identified the need for Public Education**

Some participants said that they experienced racial discrimination in Halifax. One said, “There is racial discrimination among the people who are here. You feel singled out” [FG2]. They would like to see more public education because:

*Diversity is controversial, but it should be beneficial. There should be a focus on integration not factionalism. One could be Muslim or Christian, but thinking Canadian [FG1].*

## Survey of Service Providers

A survey was sent to 20 service-providing agencies throughout HRM. (See Appendix). The following fourteen service providers responded to the survey:

- CDHA Continuing Care
- Chebucto Links Senior Support Association
- Halifax Public Library
- Halifax Regional Municipality
- ISIS
- Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia
- Metropolitan Regional Housing Authority
- Northwood Home Care
- NS Department of Community Services
- NS Department of Health, Continuing Care
- NS Department of Seniors
- Senior Secretariat
- Spencer House
- YMCA

Service providers were asked what services they provided for senior immigrants, and whether immigrant seniors access their regular services. They also discussed challenges to service provision and provided their recommendations.

For the most part, the challenges identified by the service providers correspond to those identified by the senior immigrants themselves, with the difference of perspective.

## Services for Senior Immigrants

Some organizations, such as the Legal Information Society, do not track the age or ethnicity of clients using their services, although they provide services that are relevant for seniors and immigrant seniors. [See Appendix 9]. The following organizations do track this information and know that senior immigrants have accessed their services:

- CDHA Continuing Care
- Chebucto Links
- Halifax Public Libraries
- ISIS
- Northwood Home Care
- NS Department of Health, Continuing Care
- Senior Citizens Secretariat
- Spencer House
- YMCA

**HRM** community centres host senior immigrant-focused community-driven groups and clubs based on faith, sports interest and ethnicity (ethno-cultural connections), such as the Indo-Canadian senior group.

**Halifax Public Library** is currently undertaking an asset mapping process to identify needs of senior immigrants and the immigrant community at large. This mapping will help identify gaps in service and the role that the library can play in providing better services to immigrant communities.

**ISIS** has a host program in which senior specific host matches are arranged for newcomer seniors who are feeling isolated, and for those who wish to develop their conversational English skills and engage more actively with the community

The **YMCA** has a “Coffee Club 55+” program for senior immigrants. They also provide services for senior immigrants to help with community involvement, reducing isolation, English practice, and well-being in Canada which includes Walk and Talk, cooking, craft, Tai Chi classes, and ESL Conversation groups.

NS Department of Health, Chebucto Links, Continuing Care, ISIS, Spenser House and the Legal Information Society do not offer services specifically for senior immigrants.

## **Service Provision Challenges**

ISIS, Northwood Home Care, the Metropolitan Regional Housing Authority and the YMCA identified the following challenges to the provision of services for senior immigrants:

### **1. Language**

Some programs are not equipped to provide services to clients who do not have English as a first or second language. There is a lack of formal interpretation services, and service providers do not have the resources to provide interpreters for all immigrants’ languages. In some facilities, such as nursing homes, there are instances in which no staff speaks a resident’s language.

Often, family members interpret for the seniors, and their availability affects the seniors’ participation. In some cases, family members may not know the system they are trying to explain. Service providers find that ensuring the seniors obtain accurate reliable information and they understand the letters and forms can be a challenge.

### **2. Communication**

There can be frustration and misunderstanding by clients and/or their family members as to what service providers can provide and how soon services can be provided, and consequently, expectations are not met. This creates challenges for service providers.

Reaching seniors who are isolated is also a challenge. Senior immigrants who have been sponsored by and fully rely on their family members may not know about available services.

### **3. Accommodating cultural norms, religious beliefs and diets**

Service providers report that they do not always understand the seniors' specific cultural needs (i.e., food requirements or likes/dislikes, religious rituals, and cultural norms) that impact on the senior immigrant's quality of life.

#### **4. Mental health and pre-immigration experiences**

Providing services is a challenge when clients have emotional and grieving needs that required specific care and time but many senior immigrants find it difficult to access mental health services due to the stigma. In addition, mental health services can be confusing and offensive to immigrant seniors.

#### **5. Transportation**

In order to participate in activities, senior participants need transportation. Public transportation is not always available, and for some seniors, not accessible.

#### **6. Eligibility Criteria**

If the senior is a Canadian citizen, or does not have landed immigrant status, sponsorship or a valid health card, there is a prohibitive charge for some services, and they are not eligible for others.

#### **7. Lack of Volunteers**

Some organizations cannot always find appropriate volunteers to work with senior immigrants and have waiting lists for their services. Mobility and financial concerns sometimes have an impact on the success of host matches.

#### **8. Unstable Attendance**

All of the above challenges result in unstable program attendance and this is a significant challenge for some service providers.

While most organizations recognize these challenges, some service providers report that they do not know of any cases where senior immigrants who have attempted to access their services have failed. Halifax Public Libraries are currently conducting research to determine what barriers senior immigrants face.

### **Overcoming the Challenges**

Service providers reported that work overload, and funding and time constraints prevented them from meeting these challenges. Other barriers included not having partners to work with, not being knowledgeable about what might work for immigrant seniors, and not having the resources for increased outreach. One service provider said that the lack of research into senior immigrants' needs and appropriate delivery forms prevented her organization from making changes. Another said that her organization did not know if there were sufficient numbers of senior immigrants in HRM to make provision of services cost effective.

#### **Language**

Northwood Home Care staff work with family members who speak English and interpret for their staff and supervisors. The Metropolitan Regional Housing Authority also work with the supports the seniors identify, usually family or friends, to overcome language barriers.

### **Accommodating cultural norms, religious beliefs and diets**

Some service providers know they must be knowledgeable about their clients' social, cultural, religious values, beliefs, traditions, and behaviours and attempt to gather this knowledge from the clients themselves, using a collaborative, strength-based, empowerment approach.

### **Unrealistic expectations**

Service providers attempt to be transparent regarding their role and their services.

### **Collaboration**

Collaboration with other immigrant groups was also seen as a way to overcome the challenges to service provision.

## **Recommendations from Service Providers**

Some organizations reported that they provide services for all Nova Scotians, and would like to see more senior immigrants accessing existing services; others service providers said they were not aware of any services that senior immigrants need, and yet others had suggestions for ways services could be improved.

### **Suggestions included:**

- employment and volunteer opportunities;
- improved health and home care services;
- affordable and adequate housing;
- access to technology (computers);
- transportation assistance;
- advocacy
- further research on this topic

Specific services for senior immigrants were also seen as needed. The following suggestions were also made:

### **Access to culturally appropriate services**

- Access to health, legal, financial interpreters in a culturally appropriate format
- Information and orientation on government programs (Old Age Pension, services for people with disabilities, home care supports, community services such as Meal on Wheels, etc.) in clients' mother tongues
- Services in clients' language

### **Social interaction**

- Opportunities for social interaction, and specific family orientation is needed because senior immigrants often seem isolated in their homes and would benefit from social programs, including exercise programs, in the community. Services that would help senior immigrants to integrate into the wider community are also needed.
- Volunteers from the immigrant community to visit senior immigrant nursing home residents who are from the same/similar cultural/language background to prevent isolation and enhance their overall wellbeing and increase their social network.

- The development of a senior specific host program for which volunteer recruitment and training would be tailored to meet the needs of the immigrant senior community and could mean that more senior specific host matches would be made, and the matches would be more successful.

#### **Outreach**

- Outreach to seniors and navigation aids so that senior immigrants would know what services are available and what costs might be involved

#### **Resources**

One service provider pointed out that in order to deliver appropriate services, more resources are needed.

While the above improvements would help senior immigrants in general, service providers identified ways that they could act to improve their service delivery:

#### **Knowledge**

*I feel I have a lot to learn about the specific needs of newcomer seniors before I will be able to adequately support these individuals during their settlement process. ISIS Staff.*

Most service providers said that they did not feel sufficiently informed about senior immigrants' needs to provide services for them. They recognized that they need to develop their knowledge and skills, that is, they needed to learn more about seniors' needs in general, about resources that are available, gaps and barriers. This would lead to an increased understanding of senior immigrants' needs, and help service providers communicate with them and respond appropriately.

CDHA Continuing Care suggested that volunteers could meet with nursing home staff to provide education about the customs/traditions of the senior's culture that is relevant to the immigrant in his/her daily life. In order for immigrants to feel comfortable accessing services and be able to communicate more easily with their care providers, one service provider would like to see greater diversity among service providers. They welcomed more information as it could help "to adapt our services or even look at some new services" (Spencer House). Halifax Public Libraries is planning changes based on their own research.

#### **Collaboration**

An ISIS staff person said that collaboration and partnership opportunities with government and community services that serve seniors was needed so that projects and programs that would support full settlement and integration of senior immigrants could be developed, and community and service providers would be empowered to welcome senior immigrants and support their integration. Another service provider suggested that partnerships could start with small projects, if information, knowledge and expertise are shared.

## Summary

This was a timely and preliminary study which calls for collaboration among service deliverers and more exploration of both assets and needs of senior immigrants. The issues raised here will only increase in importance as the senior immigrant population of Halifax grows. It is clear that many of the needs of senior immigrants are the needs of any seniors with the added layer of being a newcomer. This layer includes language issues, cultural differences and the lack of established networks. This project also led to more questions and it is clear that there is a need for more research.

**The majority of senior participants in this project said that living in HRM is a positive experience** because it is safe and friendly city, but many experienced challenges that made it difficult for them to settle. The most frequently identified challenges were: economic insecurity and the lack of employment opportunities for seniors and/or their children, and problems with health care, language, weather, transportation, isolation, and civic navigation were.

**The needs of family members** were not a key focus at the beginning of this project, but certainly emerged as an important concern. Family members generally appreciated having senior family members with them, but they too experienced challenges. Some said it was difficult because the senior required so much of their time and attention and this added stress to their lives that were already busy with children and language classes.

**There are also positive elements that merit further consideration.** Most seniors did have a support person in Halifax and a number of them did not know this person before they came to Halifax. This gives hope that networks can be built beyond family.

In spite of the challenges, some seniors did access services. Those most frequently accessed by seniors and/or their family members to help the seniors overcome settlement challenges were ISIS; government services such as the Old Age Security program; healthcare services; the library; and the YMCA.

**Participants made many suggestions for improvements to services and for new services** that would help senior immigrants to feel at home in HRM. These included civic navigation services, assistance finding a home, and help with transportation. A buddy system, with individuals who spoke the senior's native language, and social groups for senior immigrants were also identified as desirable.

**Service providers expressed their desire to make changes that would ensure senior immigrants are informed about and are able to access their services.** They would like to see more coordination of programs, and increased knowledge and information sharing. The insights of seniors, their family members and of service providers, indicate that a re-evaluation of the planning and delivery of culturally competent services for seniors is warranted. An expanded network of volunteer supports is also indicated. This could result in less isolation for senior immigrants, and help overcome the seniors' reliance on family members and their transportation challenges, particularly in winter. Funding agencies would need to work with service providing agencies to ensure such programs were adequately funded.

## Recommendations

Many ideas and suggestions were put forward by all the groups who participated in this study. These have been grouped into six major recommendations:

1. **Increase collaboration among service providers who are working with immigrant seniors.**
2. **Provide more and clearer information for immigrant seniors about government, community and settlement services that are available for them.**
3. **Provide more opportunities for language support, both in the form of interpretation & translation and access to English as a Second Language instruction.**
4. **Address issues of economic insecurity as they relate to employment, housing and health for immigrant seniors.**
5. **Improve access to recreation and networking activities.**
6. **Improve and increase transportation options.**

## Follow up

After the official wrap-up of this needs and assets assessment, two groups decided to continue to meet around the issues facing immigrant seniors:

- **ISIS staff** who are in positions related to immigrant seniors will meet to discuss ways to reach out to seniors, take their needs into consideration and tailor some services to better address those needs.
- Some members of the **Advisory Group** (including ISIS staff) agreed to continue meeting monthly to explore ways in which they can work together to improve services for immigrant seniors in the community. The group agreed that they will begin by sharing information and orienting each other to their services. They will also consider providing orientation on cultural issues for those working primarily with seniors and on seniors' issues for those working with immigrants. **The recommendations of this report will serve as the agenda for this group.**

## Appendix 1 Advisory Group

Andrea Leonard	Senior Director, Clinical Care	Northwood Home Care
Deborah Dostal.	Executive Director	Spencer House
Maureen McQuaid	Care Coordinator	CDHA Continuing Care
Melissa Perry Authority	Community Relations	MetroRegional Housing
Sandra Murphy	Executive Director	Community Links Association
Sharon Davis-Murdoch	Diversity & Social Inclusion	NS Dept. of Health
Sobhie El Masri	Immigrant Senior	
Susan Corser	Community Engagement	HRM Community Development
Natalie Perkins	Community Developer	HRM Community Development
Valerie Connors Assoc.	Executive Director	Chebucto Links Senior Support
Valerie White	Chief Executive Officer	NS Department of Seniors
Margaret Ann Bruhier	Senior Policy Analyst	NS Department of Seniors
Youmei Chen	Program Coordinator	YMCA Newcomers
Carmen Celina Moncayo	Family Support Worker	ISIS
Mira Musanovic	Crisis & Outreach Worker	ISIS
Nabiha Atallah	Manager of Research	ISIS

## Appendix 2 Seniors and Family Members Focus Group Consent Form

### Consent Form

I understand that I will be taking part in a focus group about settlement services for immigrant seniors. The focus group will be about two hours long, and the session may be audio-taped. The tape will be heard only by the researchers. ISIS will use the information to write a report and to design services and supports for immigrant seniors.

No one will use my real name. I may choose not to use my real name in this project. I understand, however, that confidentiality in group discussions cannot be guaranteed. The findings from this study will not reveal the identity of me or my family. I know I will be invited to a workshop to hear the results of this research.

I understand my participation is voluntary, and I may refuse to answer any specific questions or withdraw at any time. If I have any questions or comments, I may contact Carmen Celina Moncayo at ISIS Tel: 461-4283 Email: [cmoncayo@ISIS.ns.ca](mailto:cmoncayo@ISIS.ns.ca).

I have read and understood this information and voluntarily agree to participate in the focus group taking place at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_, 2009.

Signature:

## Appendix 3 Senior Focus Group and Interview Demographic Form

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this project. As you know, Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS) wants to find out what immigrant seniors need to help them settle in HRM and to feel part of the community. Your opinions will help us make sure that the programs and materials we develop will meet your needs. We will ask you questions about the services and supports you have used, if these met your needs, and if there are other programs you think would help. First, we ask you to sign a consent form, and answer a few questions about yourself. If there are any questions you do not wish to answer, please leave them blank.

1. Male  Female
  
  2. Age group  
54 and under  55-65  66-75  Over 75
  
  3. What country did you arrive from?
  
  4. Is that your country of origin? If no, what is your country of origin?
  
  5. Which ethnic group do you belong to?
  
  6. What is your race?  
Asian/Pacific Islander  
Black  
Hispanic/Latino  
White/Caucasian  
Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
  7. Do you have any disabilities? Yes  No   
How would you describe your disability? Prompt: Mental, physical
  
  8. What was your immigration class?  
Provincial Nominee  Skilled Worker  Family Class   
Business Class   
Convention Refugee  Sponsored by:  
Government  Church  Community Group  Private Person   
Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
  9. How long have you lived in Canada?
  
  10. Are you working? Yes  No   
If yes, what do you do?
-

11. What is your source of income (check as many as apply)

Self  Family  Government

12. What language do you speak most often at home?

13. What other languages do you speak?

14. Do you live alone Yes  No

If no, who else lives in your household?

Partner  Son  Daughter  Parents  Other

15. Do you have (other) relatives in HRM Yes  No

If yes, who are your closest relatives in HRM?

Partner  Son  Daughter  Parents  Other

16. Do you have close friends in HRM? Yes  No

17. Who is your closest support person? Prompt: Who would you go to if you need help?

[Relationship, not name]

18. Did you know these people before you came to HRM?

Yes  Some of them  No

19. Are you a member or do you attend meetings of any cultural or religious groups?

If yes, which one(s)?

## Appendix 4 Senior Focus Group Questions

1. Please describe your experiences of living in HRM. Has it been difficult, pleasant? What words would you use to describe it?
2. What are the challenges you have or have had that have made settling in Halifax difficult?  
  
Prompt: literacy; health issues; isolation; employability, age, finances, pre-immigration experiences, weather
3. If you have used any services to help you, please say which ones and whether they were helpful or not, and why/  
e.g., the library, Spencer House, recreation centre, seniors centre?
4. What other services, programs, supports would help you feel at home in HRM?
5. Is there anything you would like to add about what could be done better to help you feel at home here?

## Appendix 5 Senior Interview Consent Form

### Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this project. As you know, the Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS) wants to find out what immigrant seniors need to help them settle in HRM and to feel part of the community. We want your opinion so that the programs and materials we develop will meet your needs. We will ask you questions about the services and supports you have used, if these met your needs, and if there are other programs you think would help.

First, we ask you to sign a consent form, and answer a few questions about yourself. If there are any questions you do not wish to answer, please leave them blank.

I understand that I will be taking part in an interview about settlement services for immigrant seniors. The interview will be about two hours long, and the session may be audio-taped. The tape will be heard only by the researchers. ISIS will use the information to write a report and to design services and supports for immigrant seniors.

No one will use my real name. I may choose not to use my real name in this project. The findings from this study will not reveal the identity of me or my family. I know I will be invited to a workshop to hear the results of this research.

I understand my participation is voluntary, and I may refuse to answer any specific questions or withdraw at any time. If I have any questions or comments, I may contact Carmen Celina Moncayo at ISIS Tel: 461-4283 Email: [cmoncayo@ISIS.ns.ca](mailto:cmoncayo@ISIS.ns.ca).

I have read and understood this information and voluntarily agree to participate in the interview taking place at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_, 2009.

Signature:

## Appendix 6 Seniors Interview Questions

1. What has been your experience of living in HRM?
2. Do you feel settled and at home in HRM now: If yes: What helped you to settle? If less than yes: What makes it difficult for you to feel at home here.
3. What would you say are the challenges/difficulties you have at the moment?
4. What do you need to help you overcome these difficulties?
5. Have you used any services or supports to help you live in HRM? If yes: Which services have you used?
6. How easy were these services to access? Prompt: Did you find them easy/difficult to get to? Was language a problem?
7. Did you need any kind or support to access these services? Prompt: interpretation, transportation, friendship
8. Was the service helpful? If yes: in what way? Are there ways the service could serve you better?  
If no: Why was it unhelpful? What would you like to see changed?
9. Have you used any other services in HRM, e.g., the library, Spencer House, recreation centre, seniors centre?
10. Was this service helpful?  
If yes: in what way? Are there ways the service could serve you better?  
If no: Why was it unhelpful? What would you like to see changed?
11. Have you used any other services in other places?  
If yes: What and where? Were these services helpful? In what ways?
12. What other things would you like to see offered that would help you feel at home in HRM?
13. Is there anything you would like to add about what could be done better to help you feel at home in HRM?

## Appendix 7 Family Members Interview Demographic Form

1. Male  Female
2. Age group  
Under 30  30-49  50-69  70 or over
3. In which country were you born?
4. Which family member are you going to talk about today?  
Mother  Father  Other \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is this [relative's] country of origin?
6. How long have they been in Canada?
7. How old are they? 54 and under  55-65  66-75  Over 75
8. Which ethnic group do you belong to?
9. Which ethnic group does your [relative] belong to?
10. What is your race?  
Asian/Pacific Islander  Black  Hispanic/Latino  White/Caucasian   
Other \_\_\_\_\_
11. What is your [relative's] race?
12. Does your [relative] have any disabilities?  
Yes  No
13. How would you describe this disability? Prompt: Mental, physical
14. What was your [relative's] immigration class?  
Provincial Nominee  Skilled Worker  Family Class   
Business Class   
Convention Refugee  Sponsored by:  
Government  Church  Community Group  Private Person

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

15. How long have you lived in Canada?
16. How long has your [relative] lived in Canada?
17. Is your [relative] working?      Yes |                      No |  
If yes, what do they do?
18. What is your [relative's] source of income (check as many as apply)  
Self |                      Family | Government |
19. What language do you speak most often with your [relative]?
20. Does your [relative] live alone Yes |      No |  
If no, who else lives in their household?  
Partner |      Son |                      Daughter |                      Parents | Other |
21. Do they have (other) relatives in HRM Yes |      No |  
If yes, who are your closest relatives in HRM?  
Partner | Son |      Daughter |                      Parents | Other |
22. Do they have close friends in HRM? Yes |                      No |
23. Who is their closest support person? Prompt: Who would you go to if you need help?  
[Relationship, not name]
24. Did they know these people before you came to HRM?  
Yes |      Some of them |      No |
25. Are they a member or do you attend meetings of any cultural or religious groups?  
If yes, which one(s)?

## Appendix 8 Family Members Focus Group Questions

1. Please describe your experiences of having a senior family member living in HRM. Has it been difficult for you, pleasant? What words would you use to describe it?
2. How has the experience been for your family member?
3. What are the challenges you have or have had helping them settle in Halifax?  
Prompt: literacy; health issues; isolation; employability, age, finances, pre-immigration experiences, weather
4. If you have used any services to help you and your family member, please say which ones and whether they were helpful or not, and why.  
e.g., the library, Spencer House, recreation centre, seniors centre.
5. What other services, programs, supports would help you help your family member feel at home in HRM?
6. Is there anything you would like to add about what could be done better to help your family member feel at home here?

## Appendix 9 Service Provider Survey

1. Do you provide any services for seniors? Yes No  
If yes: Please briefly describe these services
  
2. Do you provide any services specifically for senior immigrants?  
Yes No  
If yes: Please briefly describe these services  
Do you experience any challenges providing these services?  
If yes: Please explain  
How do you overcome these challenges?
  
3. Have you ever had any senior immigrants accessing your services?  
Yes No Don't know  
If yes: which services?
  
4. Do you know of any senior immigrants who have attempted to access your services but have experienced difficulties or for some reason have failed?  
Yes No  
  
Can you explain why they experienced difficulties or failed?
  
5. Are you aware of any services that senior immigrants need?  
Yes No  
If yes: Please explain
  
6. Would you like to provide services for senior immigrants?  
Yes No  
If yes: what services?
  
7. Do you feel sufficiently informed about senior immigrants to provide services for them?

## Appendix 10 Services for Seniors

The following organizations provide services which, although not always specifically designed for seniors, are often used by them, including immigrant seniors.

**CDHA Continuing Care** provides Home Care Services including Home Supports (i.e., personal care, essential housekeeping, meal preparation, family respite, and palliative support); long term care services such as nursing home care and small options.

**Halifax Public Libraries** provides collections of large print and audio materials; Home Delivery services both to private residences and nursing homes; Books by Mail services for those for whom Home Delivery is not available; Computer classes which are heavily used by seniors; and ELL tutoring at several branches. Some branches offer information and cultural programs specifically targeted at Older Adults such as “Seniors Cafe” programs and programs on such topics as health, financial planning, and local history. The library promotes their services to seniors at community events such as the 50+ Expo. Some branches have computer workstations with accessibility options.

Three **Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM)** divisions have specific programs that focus on seniors:

- Public Transportation offers a discount on public transit tickets, bus passes and cash fares; has an Access-a-bus service, accessible low floor buses cater to wheelchairs on some routes, and a snow removal program for seniors.
- Senior Crime Prevention Seminars are presented by officers to seniors groups, senior volunteers speak to other seniors about home safety audits, and pedestrian safety programs for seniors are conducted.
- The Northern Lights Seniors citizen’s club- provides space at the Bloomfield centre for seniors to meet and conduct activities; Indo-Canadian Seniors provides space for seniors to meet and conduct activities; and the 48 Community Centres owned by HRM have the capability to book space for seniors to meet and take part in activities.

The **Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia** provides legal information for seniors and their families through their Legal Information Line, Dial-a-Law, website and publications. General legal information that may be of interest to particular seniors includes that on common law relationships, elder abuse, guardianship of adults, etc. In addition, LISNS is currently conducting two projects on Pension issues and a Legal Information Kit. The latter will include community workshops across the province for seniors.

The **Metropolitan Regional Housing Authority** provides rental housing for people (including seniors – defined as 58 years of age and older) with low income. Rent is based on the individuals/ families income.

**Northwood Home Care** provides homecare/home support services to residents of the HRM, including personal care, meal preparation, light housekeeping, and respite.

The **NS Department of Community Services** provides assistance to seniors under the Property Tax Rebate (PTR). The PTR program is available to all seniors receiving the federal Guaranteed Income Supplement, who live in their own homes and had their previous year's property taxes paid in full.

The **NS Department of Health Continuing Care** is not a direct service provider. However, they fund programs such as home support, long term care, nursing care as well as financial support programs and financial advice for seniors entering nursing homes.

### **The group of organizations that follows provides services specifically aimed at seniors**

**Chebucto Links Senior Support Association** is a seniors' outreach program which provides weekly programs for seniors, including a lunch program, exercise classes, card games, and a program which includes fellowship, education, spirituality and exercise. One on one computer classes for seniors are offered in their homes. Chebucto Links also distributes the Vial of Life, a program which provides an individual's health information in case of a home emergency, and links seniors with other programs, services and resources they require in the community, e.g., foot care, care giving, housekeeping, snow shoveling, and lawn care. Programs are held at various church sites across the city which makes them more accessible.

The mandate of the **NS Department of Seniors** is to facilitate the planning and development of services and programs for seniors by coordinating and developing plans, policies and programs for and with seniors in partnership with the responsible departments of government, other provincial parties and voluntary seniors' groups.

The Department provides a toll-free line (which provides information and referral about services and programs for seniors) and a Senior Abuse Line (which provides information and support to seniors and those concerned about a situation of abuse). Both lines are toll-free within Nova Scotia. The Department also has three grant initiatives which support the: health, well-being and community participation of seniors (Positive Aging Fund); development of age-friendly communities (Age-Friendly Communities Program) and; safety and security of seniors (Senior Safety Grant).

Under the first strategic goal outlined in the Department's Business Plan (2009-2010), "*To improve innovation and collaboration to ensure the diverse needs of seniors are met*", the Department committed to, "Engaging seniors from diverse communities in order to further advance the 9<sup>th</sup> goal, 'Respecting Diversity', outlined in the *Strategy for Positive Aging*". The specific strategic action outlined is to: Engage the inter-departmental Action Plan for Positive Aging Working Group and seniors to identify priorities and best practices for engaging seniors from diverse groups.

The **Senior Citizens Secretariat** provides general information to seniors and information about elder abuse prevention. They also provide funding for programs that encourage positive aging.

**Spencer House** has health-related, home support and recreation services for seniors who are living independently. Services include a hot lunch five days a week, foot care, blood pressure clinics, exercise programs, computer training, snow removal, bingo, bus trips, craft programs and social events. A safe, comfortable environment where seniors can be with others and volunteer opportunities are provided.

### **Services for Immigrants**

A number of organizations provide services for immigrants which, while not specifically for senior immigrants, are accessed by seniors. Examples of the latter are Senior Citizens Secretariat which consults with the Indo Canadian Organization and liaises with ISIS on projects; and ISIS, which provides settlement services to all immigrants who may require them, including interpretation, health advocacy, referral and connections to existing services. Crisis intervention, counseling and outreach services are available to all eligible clients in the area of law, family relationships, domestic violence, finances, mental health, medical issues and housing. Individual family orientation for Government Assisted Refugee new arrivals, and a host program and volunteer opportunities for both Canadian and newcomer seniors are also offered.