ALLIANCE DES FEMMES DE LA FRANCOPHONIE CANADIENNE

Pan-Canadian Strategy for Francophone Immigrant Women in Minority Communities:

Breaking Down Barriers for Equitable Integration

Explanatory Sheet Chapter 7: Family Life

Issues

Mental workload and communication

- Overload of family and cultural responsibilities for immigrant women.
- Lack of promotion of existing services and appropriate communication channels.
- Lack of recognition of family support by government authorities.

Difficulty accessing housing

- Difficulties in accessing housing for immigrant women and their families.
- Inadequate services that do not meet the needs of immigrant families.
- Lack of transitional housing for families on arrival.
- Families living in substandard housing, especially those with more than two children.
- Lack of knowledge of housing regulations, leading to abuse.

Limited access to childcare

- Shortage of daycare spaces, particularly in Francophone settings.

Family activities

- Need to strengthen ties between immigrant families in French schools.
- Immigrant parents find it difficult to participate in community activities due to lack of childcare services.
- Need for programs that allow parents and children to participate in activities simultaneously.
- Support tailored to the needs of pregnant women and new mothers.

To learn more on the Pan-Canadian strategy, visit
immigration.affc.ca/en

Level of difficulty faced by women

39%
Help finding accomodations
(+ 5%)

36%
Health services
(+ 2%)

34%
Childcare services
(+ 6%)

33%
Employment services
(+ 4%)

Note: the numbers in brackets indicate the difference between mothers and other immigrant women.

52%
are mothers

36% of mothers have 2 children
28% of mothers have 3 children
20% of mothers have one child

During their immigration to Canada, 42% of Francophone women were married with children, 26% single without children, and 67% of mothers have or had at least one child aged 6 or younger. Immigration adds to women's mental burden, especially that of mothers.

Best Practices

Policies that include education and language support programs for immigrant parents, thus reducing the pressure on children.

- **Taking into account the diversity of family structures among immigrant populations: childcare, access to education, promotion of equal opportunities in the labour market.**
- **Policies must offer empowerment programs and social support initiatives (specific to the challenges faced by women).**
- **The creation of integration programs that encourage communication and understanding within immigrant families.**

Examples of initiatives:

- The Placet Center in Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium) is dedicated to welcoming and integrating international students.
- Centre Interculturel de Mons et du Borinage (Wallonia) and local integration initiatives.
- In the Flanders region, a specific integration program (AMIF) for parents with low literacy skills who have young children.
- The **AVEVI** project (Support for victims of domestic violence) in Belgium.

Objective 7: Offer services that are free from obstacles for women, recognizing their mental burden.

Recommended Strategies

Provide personalized services as soon as families arrive

Pairing a social worker with a woman/her family from the moment they arrive at the airport for a personalized welcome and support service in order to develop a bond of trust and thus study needs from day 1 and ensure regular follow-up.

Tailor activities to the needs of women and mothers

Organize activities with adapted schedules and formats to overcome certain obstacles, in addition to setting up a childcare service available during activities, including on evenings and weekends.

Facilitating language accessibility

Develop resources in French to meet the needs of Francophone immigrant communities and raise their awareness of the reality of Francophone immigrant women.

Provide financial and political support

Increase the amounts granted to new arrivals who have families, and consider setting up a real French-language childcare service to meet the needs of the job market in the communities.

Provide transitional housing for women

Provide new arrivals with transitional housing upon their arrival on Canadian soil. This will enable them to navigate the search for suitable housing for themselves and their families, if necessary, while limiting their vulnerability.

Strengthening family interventions and community networks

Organize activities and create formal and informal networks to support families, particularly through schools. The consolidation of the network of Francophone schools and French-language childcare services will facilitate the integration of women into their community.

Provide support tailored to immigrant families

Increase funding and recognition for tailored support initiatives for Francophone immigrant women and offer workshops and information programs on Canadian parenting standards.

"When we take on the responsibility of welcoming families to our country, we have to make sure we have adequate housing and daycare, and that we do what is necessary to ensure that they are in a good position to find a job that is worthy of their expertise. It's as if Canada were to bring in people before having the social, community and economic fabric necessary to welcome them in French."
-Participant in the Alberta focus group