Housing Issues Facing Immigrants and Refugees in Greater Toronto: Initial Findings from the Jamaican, Polish and Somali Communities

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Publication

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1. Introduction

Toronto is the primary reception area for Canada’s immigrants and refugees. Since the early 1970s approximately one-third of immigrants and refugees coming to Canada each year have settled in the Toronto area, which has only about thirteen percent of Canada’s population. The number of immigrants entering Canada, and settling initially in the Toronto area, increased dramatically in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For Toronto, the numbers fluctuated from just under 30,000 in the mid-1980s to more than 70,000 in the early 1990s (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 1994:13). The countries of origin of these immigrants have also changed dramatically since the late 1960s. Until the late 1960s, most of Toronto’s immigrants were from Britain and other European
countries. Since then there has been a substantial internationalization of Toronto’s population with the arrival of relatively large numbers of immigrants from various countries in Asia, Africa, Central and South America and the Caribbean. The flow of immigrants to Toronto also represents a wide spectrum of economic classes ranging from refugees to business people.

Many of these new Canadians face considerable difficulties as they begin their lives in Toronto. Potential problems include finding employment, accessing social services and dealing with complex legal systems. It is in the process of seeking permanent housing – especially in a market such as Toronto with relatively few rental vacancies – that the newcomer experiences many of these interrelated complexities. For many new Canadians the process of finding appropriate housing can be made more difficult by the lack of adequate financial resources and by the racial and gender barriers which still permeate much of Canadian society. This paper outlines the experiences of three recent immigrant groups (Jamaican, Polish and Somali) in finding suitable housing in greater Toronto. The evaluation of housing experiences is based on a number of focus group sessions that were held with members of each community. The focus groups were planned as a preliminary step to the development of a questionnaire survey but it was soon discovered that they provided a rich source of information by themselves. The focus group discussion topics included housing preferences, barriers, strategies and outcomes. Since barriers to obtaining suitable housing soon became the most important topic this is the main theme of the paper.

We begin by placing the focus group analysis in the context of the larger research project of which it is part. This is followed by a discussion of immigration to the Toronto area and the contextual framework of immigrant settlement in Toronto, including the local economic structure and housing market conditions. We then describe briefly the structure of the focus group sessions and the characteristics of the groups under study. Following a discussion of findings from the focus group sessions we conclude with a summary of the barriers that the three immigrant groups face in Toronto’s housing market and a brief consideration of the strategies used to overcome the barriers as well as the housing outcomes of the three immigrant groups. Since the study is ongoing, with additional focus groups and more formal interviews to be conducted, the results presented here should be viewed as preliminary.

2. The Housing New Canadians Project

Housing New Canadians is a three-year funded project designed as a partnership between academic researchers and ethnic based communities in greater Toronto. Very little is known about the housing experiences of immigrants and refugees in Canada. There is a large body of literature on various aspects of ethnicity and ‘race,’ both in Canada generally and Toronto more specifically (e.g., Henry, 1994; Breton et al., 1990), but little of it is focused on housing and access to housing. The few studies that focus on ethnicity and housing are all relatively small scale and often relate to smaller and less complex housing markets than greater Toronto’s (e.g., Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, 1992). A notable exception is an exploratory study of the experience of refugees in securing housing in the City of Toronto (City of Toronto Housing Department, 1992).

The Housing New Canadians project includes three major components: research, education and action. The research style is based on a participatory approach whereby academics work together with community partners in developing research questions and
methodology and evaluating the results from the research. A steering committee consisting of knowledgeable people from various organizations serving ethnic communities, from government agencies and from the local universities was established to guide the research. In addition to the formal research activities the participatory approach involves education and action. Through workshops and lectures the project has become an important focal point for exchanging ideas about the housing experiences of a variety of immigrant and racial groups, both in Canadian cities and in other countries such as the United States, Sweden and the Netherlands. Finally, the action stage of the project is designed to provide policy-relevant findings to help promote social change.

The housing experience of new Canadians is conceived of as having three aspects: (1) access to housing (the physical housing unit); (2) house as home and social living / working environment (the social, psychological, and cultural aspects of the house); and (3) house and community (the house and home in its neighbourhood and community setting). The particular focus of this paper is access to housing, that is, the process by which housing is obtained, and especially the barriers that new Canadians face in obtaining suitable housing. It should also be noted that we are examining the housing experiences of new Canadians who have been in the country for at least 18 to 36 months and are therefore past the initial stage of resettlement.

The research is based on the premise that many new Canadians are likely to experience multiple aspects of disadvantage resulting from three key factors: ‘race’ (defined mainly as skin colour), gender and class (socio-economic status). This results in what Henry (1994:11), drawing from a variety of anthropological and sociological literature, refers to as differential incorporation. In a general sense, differential incorporation refers to a lack of equal access by particular groups to the rewards provided by society. These rewards are often measured by economic indicators such as educational opportunities, job prospects, and income differentials. Another important domain of incorporation, however, is housing. Indeed, using a life course perspective, it could be argued that immigrants first seek a place to live and a local community for their families. Subsequently, they and their children enter the educational system for language training, schooling and job training and, finally, their experiences with training and schools (in addition to education and skills from their home country) influence work and employment. Throughout the life course immigrants seek services from a variety of communities and institutions and also create communities and institutions to better serve their needs.

The research has also been informed by the academic literature concerning the way in which households find housing in cities. Numerous theoretical and empirical studies have been undertaken focusing on various aspects of the housing search process. Although recognising the importance of involuntary moves resulting from demolitions and evictions, most of these studies assume that, aside from financial constraint, households have relatively free choice of where to live in the city and make their choices largely on the basis of life cycle stage and lifestyle (e.g., Brown and Moore, 1970). More recently, the focus has shifted from an emphasis on needs and preferences to a concern with barriers in the housing market, especially the discriminatory practices of “gatekeepers” in the housing system, such as landlords, real estate agents and mortgage lenders (e.g., Henry, 1989; Galster, 1992; Hulchanski, 1993; Massey and Denton, 1993; Feagin, 1994). This is an explicit recognition that many households do not have free choice of where to live and that income constraints may be exacerbated by factors such as language, racial discrimination, source of income, gender, and household type and size.
3. Immigration to Toronto

Historically, Toronto has been a British city and until the late 1960s the majority of Toronto's immigrants were from Britain and other European countries. Preference was given to 'white' immigrants from other Commonwealth countries, continental Europe and the United States. The 'preferred' system was replaced in 1967 with a 'points' system which treated immigrants in the same way regardless of country of origin. The result has been a substantial increase in immigrants from South and East Asia (primarily Hong Kong, India and Sri Lanka), the Caribbean, South East Asia (e.g., Vietnam and the Philippines), Africa and Central and South America. Of all immigrants residing in the Toronto census metropolitan area in 1991, 90 percent of those who came before 1966 were from Europe (including Britain) while only 21 percent of those arriving in the 1986-1991 period were from Europe. About half came from various Asian countries and another quarter were from countries in Africa, Central and South America and the Caribbean (unpublished 1991 census statistics, Statistics Canada). By 1991 about 38 percent of Toronto's population was born outside Canada and less than half of the population was of British or French origin.

New immigrants are a varied group representing four major categories: entrepreneurs with money to invest (business class), immigrants sponsored by close relatives (family class), immigrants admitted on humanitarian grounds (refugee and designated class) and a catch-all category characterized by persons with occupational skills and/or relatives in Canada who agree to provide financial support if necessary (independent class). Of the approximately 72,000 immigrants and refugees destined for Toronto in 1993, about 41 percent were in the family class, 32 percent were independents, 15 percent refugees and 9 percent in the business category (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 1994: 12). The ethno-racial composition, net worth upon first arrival in Canada and skill level of these groups differ dramatically. Refugees, most of whom lack financial resources and many of whom are visible minorities, likely experience the greatest difficulty in securing appropriate housing.

The spatial differentiation of immigrant groups in Toronto and the kind of housing they occupy has also changed dramatically during the past three decades. The Italians, who arrived primarily in the 1950s and 1960s, and the Portuguese who followed in the 1960s and 1970s first settled in the older row housing of the traditional immigrant reception area west of the city centre. Many of these houses were divided into flats and rented to recent immigrants from the same ethnic background as the owner. As each group achieved social mobility they moved to newer housing in the suburbs and were replaced by other groups, most recently the Chinese. In contrast to these trends, immigrants arriving in Toronto since the 1970s have settled in a number of quite different immigrant reception areas. Now, recent immigrant groups occupy a much greater variety of housing in terms of tenure, structural type, quality and location. Examples include concentrations of relatively high income Chinese in the northeast suburbs, South Asians in more modest housing in the northwest suburbs and Somali refugees in apartment buildings near the airport. Still others are housed in public and low rent private apartments scattered in pockets throughout the central city and the inner suburbs. Spatially, concentrations of new immigrant groups in Toronto have become more diffuse and more suburban. Economically, they have become more diverse.

It should also be noted that in contrast to many European countries most immigrant settlement services in Toronto are provided by a complex array of non-governmental or-
organizations, many of which are specific to particular ethnic groups. These organizations, funded by various government grants and private sector sources, provide a wide range of services, including assistance in finding suitable housing. The advantage of such organizations is that they are able to provide culturally sensitive services to new immigrant groups in their own language. Consequently, there is a possibility of building immigrant communities from the bottom up in a country that promotes multiculturalism as official government policy. The disadvantage is some overlap in service provision and chronic underfunding of many organizations.

4. Toronto’s Housing Context

Opportunities for housing occupancy in Toronto vary widely. Of the total housing stock in the Toronto area about 57 percent is ownership housing of various types, ranging from expensive detached housing to condominium apartments in various price ranges (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department, 1993). Although there have been substantial swings in the ability of households to access the ownership sector, the reality is that many recent immigrants cannot afford to buy. This is a considerable change from the 1960s and 1970s when the relative cost of ownership for European migrants entering Toronto was much lower. Indeed, these immigrants have generally achieved a higher rate of home ownership than the population as a whole, partially because of relatively lower house prices but also due to the high intrinsic value that they place on home ownership.

For most lower income new immigrants, housing opportunities are restricted to the rental market. The rental stock varies widely in structural form, ownership and price. About half the rental stock is conventional (purpose-built) apartments in the private rental sector, while the rest is distributed amongst rented houses, apartments in houses, rented condominium units and social housing (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department, 1993:13). Because much of the private rental stock is under rent control rent increases have been rather gradual over the past decade. However, vacancy rates are very low, less than one percent through most of the 1980s, increasing to above two percent in the early 1990s and then falling back again.

Social housing accounts for a relatively small proportion of the overall total housing stock in greater Toronto. Less than ten percent is in the non-profit and government-owned social housing sector, of which only about two-thirds is rent-geared-to-income. Because of the long waiting lists for social housing many new immigrants find rental accommodation in relatively poorly maintained buildings at the lower end of the private rental market. Black households, however, both from the Caribbean and various African countries, are strongly over-represented in entirely rent-geared-to-income developments operated by the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority. The proportion of blacks in this stock has increased dramatically since the early 1970s (Murdie, 1994). Black households have been particularly affected by difficulties in Toronto’s tight private rental market because of income constraints, various forms of discrimination (gender, family composition and ‘race’) and low vacancy rates (Hulchanski, 1993, 1994).

5. Selection of Ethnic Groups and Focus Group Sessions
The focus group sessions were conducted among the three ethnic groups that have been selected for the Housing New Canadians project. The three groups were chosen so as to have two visible minority groups represented, the Jamaicans and Somalis, and one ‘non-visible’ ethnic group, the recent wave of immigrants from Poland. These are all relatively large groups and representatives from each participated in the initial workshop sessions which defined this research project and serve on the project’s steering committee.

Jamaicans began to arrive in Toronto in the late 1960s and are still coming to Canada, mainly Toronto, in large numbers. Between 1991 and 1993, more than 15,000 Jamaican immigrants arrived in the province of Ontario, a majority of whom probably live in Toronto. In contrast to the Jamaicans, who comprise an ‘older’ immigrant group for purposes of our study, the Somalis are a ‘recent’ visible minority group who started arriving in Toronto in the late 1980s. It is estimated that 25,000 Somalis have resettled in Canada, most in the Toronto area (Opoku-Dapaah, 1995). The most recent wave of Polish immigrants also began arriving in the late 1980s. Like the Jamaicans, the Poles have a long established community in Toronto with organizations which newcomers can turn to for assistance. The Polish group is part of the ‘Solidarity Wave’ who left Poland as a result of the deteriorating economy and political tensions of the 1980s. Almost 30,000 Poles came to Ontario between 1991 and 1993, of which a majority probably settled in the Toronto area (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 1994).

Nine focus group sessions were conducted during a twelve month period in 1994-1995 (four Jamaican, four Somali and one Polish). An average of eight participants attended each session. A series of open ended questions were asked about the housing preferences of each group, the barriers encountered in the housing search process, the search strategies used to overcome the barriers encountered, and the outcome (the quality of housing obtained). The purpose of the focus groups was to explore issues that the researchers were not familiar with and to identify in a preliminary way the types of experiences of each group in Toronto’s housing market. This information would be useful in the development of a more formal questionnaire survey. Specifically, we wanted to involve the communities in the process of designing appropriate procedures of data collection that would be useful to the groups themselves and to ensure that we would not avoid key issues of relevance to the communities. It was soon discovered, however, that the focus groups were not only a means toward the next step but also an end in themselves. Therefore we extended the number of focus group sessions and decided to report in a formal way on the information generated by the focus groups. In contrast to our earlier intentions, community members on the Housing New Canadians steering committee became active participants in the organization of the focus groups and ultimately participated in the groups themselves. In this way, committee members acted as bridges between the researchers and the communities and sometimes participated in more than one focus group. By being comfortable with the researchers they facilitated the comfort level of other group members.

6. Barriers to Housing Access: Findings from the Focus Groups

The three ethnic groups experienced quite different barriers in the Toronto housing market. Aside from income constraints, two major factors dominated the discussions, language and ‘race.’ Language was important for the Polish and to a lesser extent the Somalis while ‘race’ was significant for the Jamaicans and the Somalis. Other important
barriers included source of income (receipt of social assistance), household size, and gender.

6.1 Language, ‘Race,’ Ethnicity

Language is a major barrier for Polish immigrants coming to Toronto. This means that they first look for housing in the existing area of Polish settlement in Toronto, little Poland in the west end of the City of Toronto. This is a place where Polish immigrants feel at ‘home’ in Canada, living among those who speak the same language and are of the same ethnic background and culture. A location in the existing Polish community is particularly important for immigrants from the rural areas of Poland. Not only do these people not speak English but they are not familiar or comfortable with the formalities of urban life. In Poland they were accustomed to a close network of friends and relatives among whom a person’s word was more important than legal documents. As a result, they are not familiar with apartment leases and the need to be careful when signing a lease in order not to be locked into a rental agreement with highly restrictive terms or for an unreasonable length of time. In general, the participants agreed that aside from those on social assistance finding a ‘decent’ apartment within the Polish community was not difficult. However, the importance of a well established community base, with supportive individuals, was highlighted by the work of a nun of Polish background, based in the Toronto suburb of Mississauga, who has been instrumental in sponsoring Polish immigrants and finding accommodation for these newcomers during their first few weeks in Canada.

For the Jamaican community, ‘race’ is a dominant barrier in finding an appropriate residential location in greater Toronto. This seems to apply to all tenure types – home ownership, private rental and public rental – and to all income groups. There seemed to be a feeling that Jamaicans want to live in ‘mixed’ residential areas but that racial discrimination is a barrier towards achieving acceptance in predominantly white neighbourhoods. This is often a relatively subtle but powerful form of discrimination. As one participant expressed it:

“I do not think that we consciously look for areas predominantly white or black ... but eventually we end up living in areas that we can identify with the people living there ... I do not know how that happens, but I did try a white area but [that] did not work out because they [whites] look at you, you feel like a leopard, if you feel not needed here ... you can feel it, you can feel the tension when you enter there ... so eventually you do not think about that ... you can feel the tension”

There is a strong feeling among Jamaicans that racial discrimination is rampant in all sectors of the housing market. As has been well documented in the United States, there seemed to be the view that real estate agents in Toronto also steer potential Jamaican home buyers into particular areas of the city. The views expressed by some of the focus group participants were quite explicit.

“On the issue of owning a house I was told that some real estate agents had been instructed not to bring people of colour into specific areas ... I heard that last year”

“My sister [black person] dealt with an agent and when they were looking for housing in a particular area, the agent said to her – ‘this is a nice area, not too many black people live here’ ... it was shocking!”
There was, however, a minority view as expressed by the following participant who believed that real estate agents simply want to collect their commission, regardless of the racial background of the purchaser:

“I don’t think that [racial steering], agents want your money, they want to sell, they do not care [about the ‘race’ of the purchaser]”

In Toronto, a relatively large proportion of Jamaicans live in social housing, particularly rent-geared-to-income public housing operated by the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority. In the focus group sessions, participants were especially critical of the way in which the housing authority steered Jamaicans to particular developments.

“Black seniors in Metro Toronto are ‘channeled’ to black areas and treated differently by housing authorities ...”

“Why and how certain areas in Metro housing turned all Black? ... in some other areas specially in white senior areas they remain all white, those buildings are nicer ... but they put our [Black] seniors in high crime areas with a lot of violence ...”

“in government housing, Metro Housing ... some neighbourhoods are easy to get in ... I move in and some of the more affluent people [whites] move out ... we move to areas without security, there is no recreational facilities ... basically you are reduced to something that is less than acceptable for a human being.”

Some Jamaicans indicated that they would prefer to live in an integrated neighbourhood but that this was difficult because of the “white flight” phenomenon. This tendency of white home owners to sell once the black population in a neighbourhood reaches a critical threshold has been well documented in United States cities. The view is that once a tipping point of ten to fifteen percent minority residents is reached whites flee and move to an all white neighbourhood. Although there is some evidence of racial discrimination in the Toronto housing market (e.g., Henry, 1989) there has been no documentation of the tipping point phenomenon in Toronto. The views from the focus group sessions were mixed on this point but indicated a need for further examination of the issue. For example, two respondents cited personal experience of the “white flight” phenomenon:

“I used to live at --- in Scarborough [an eastern suburb] ... two years after we moved there, there were no white families at all in our street (there are 35 houses there) ... on the road beside ours it is only white people ... incredible! I think when blacks move in to a certain place, whites move out.”

“sometimes housing is accessible, but there is also the problem, the moment you [black] move in, your neighbours [whites] start moving out ... I know that for a fact ... in my street I moved in and since I moved in four houses went for sale ... they [whites] are moving out. So in certain areas the houses are available but what you find is that the community is basically becoming more ‘immigrant,’ ‘ethnic based’ ...”

Another respondent had a somewhat different view and suggested that his neighbourhood was integrated:
“Another factor that concerns me as a homeowner is integration ... racial integration, you expect a mixture of people ... in my neighbourhood the majority is white/Anglo Saxon ... predominantly a white community but there is integration in my area.”

It was also felt by another participant that the potential for integration varied by location within the city. Suburban areas that are newer and have not had time to develop strong social networks and cliques were thought to be more open. For example:

There are areas in the city where people do not mix (e.g., old neighbourhoods). In old neighbourhoods whites seem to be less receptive to black residents than in the suburbs (new neighbourhoods) – there is more integration.

Still others felt it unlikely that blacks would choose to live in a white area because of fear of harassment.

“I am not so sure about that point because I have seen people who can afford to go to these areas (to certain areas) but they are not going because they do not want to be harassed.”

“They prefer to live in areas with people of their own kind, they do not want their kids to be harassed, to play with those of their kind ... people of the same background.”

As a group, the Somalis are newcomers to Toronto compared to the Polish and Jamaicans. In searching for housing in Toronto, the Somalis share the language difficulties of the Polish and the racial barriers of the Jamaicans. However, they do not have the same experience in the Toronto housing market that the other two groups have had, even though they have developed an impressive number of community support systems. They also come from a relatively homogeneous society and are not accustomed to racially divided neighbourhoods. Even those who speak English often do not know how the housing system works and are therefore discriminated against by white landlords. Part of this relates to white landlords not understanding Somali culture and traditions. As one participant noted:

“in our culture if a family member visits us, he will stay with us [in the same apartment], it is part of our culture, he will not go to an hotel.”

But Somalis soon learned that racism was an important factor in accessing appropriate accommodation in Toronto. The story of one respondent is telling:

“I had an experience when I first came to Canada ... when I was speaking with her [a landlady] on the ‘phone she didn’t recognize my accent ... she didn’t think I was a black person talking to her. It was a rooming house, she said ‘yes, I have a room available, it’s nice ... I took the address ... when I went down to see the place, as soon as she saw my colour, the lady said, ‘I am sorry to inform you, the apartment was rented just 15 minutes ago. I didn’t think it was because of my colour because I have not experienced racism coming from Somalia ... because [there] everybody is black. I mean we have our own problems ... tribalism ... but we don’t discriminate against colour so I didn’t make the connections ... so when I went home and my friends who have been here for awhile asked me, what happened, I said, well I really liked this place but as soon as I arrived [the landlady] said the place was rented and they [my friends] said ‘no’ let’s call her. I called again, changed my accent and
spoke to the owner, ‘Oh yes the apartment is available’, I was really shocked ... this was my first experience ... it was hard, I did not make the connections at that time.

6.2 Source of Income Receipt of Social Assistance

All three groups noted that people on social assistance have problems finding suitable accommodation, especially in the private rental sector. Several key problems arise but perhaps the most important is the stigma attached to people on welfare. People on welfare are generally viewed as inferior tenants and are screened out by some landlords who ask about income and source of income. Landlords also impose more tangible barriers such as requests for first and last month’s rent, ‘key’ money and guarantors in case the tenant defaults on his/her rent. It is very difficult for people on welfare to meet these requirements. Indeed, in many cases families have to double-up or share their apartment to help pay the rent. This results in different problems depending on the cultural background and demographic characteristics of the group. Discrimination on the basis of source of income (i.e., receiving welfare) as well as the requirement to pay ‘key money’ are both illegal in Ontario.

6.3 Household Size

Somalis tend to have larger families than Poles or Jamaicans and face problems in finding suitable rental accommodation as a result. Landlords systematically discriminate against large families and consequently some large Somali families are forced to lie about the size of their family. As one participant noted, “it’s a survival tactic used in order to get housing from landlords” while another reported that “sometimes you have to hide the kids ... single mothers have to hide the kids, we say we have adults.” Large families are also a problem in social housing because the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority does not have many units with a sufficient number of bedrooms to house the larger Somali families.

6.4 Gender

Based on a smaller number of comments, participants expressed a range of views about the relative advantage of being male or female. It varied a great deal and was linked to whether the person was on social assistance, a single parent – particularly with a large number of children – and with ‘race.’ The Polish group suggested that women were overall more welcome than men in the private rental market because they are viewed as more reliable. Single men who share housing (and this often happens during the initial settlement period) are viewed negatively as having a more unruly life-style and living in overcrowded conditions. However, women with children and on welfare faced serious barriers in accessing housing. Both the Jamaican and the Somali groups suggested that in their case discrimination occurred on the basis of ‘race’ and gender. As one Somali participant noted:

“we call them [the landlords] as well and tell them that I am on social assistance and I have two children ... Oh no problem come on down and have a look at the apartment and you get there and they realize that you are black and a female, they don’t want to deal with you at all.”

Though more research is necessary, it seems that women with children are vulnerable to discrimination and black women with children very much so. Women referred more often to shelter experiences and to public housing. As one Somali respondent said, there are “not too many choices available other than MTHA housing.” At the same time, the Ja-
maican participants emphasized the acute forms of discrimination that single black males face in seeking housing, as voiced by two respondents: “the young black male is a target in every aspect of his livelihood, especially in housing” and “young black men are [considered] a dangerous species.”

7. Conclusion

The focus of this paper has been differential access to housing by three recent immigrant and refugee groups in the Toronto area. In addition to income, differential access has been summarized in the form of four major barriers: language/race/ethnicity, source of income, household size, and gender. Of these, ‘race’ (meaning mainly colour of skin as the visible signifier for a variety of stereotypes) and language are the most important. Language is important for the Polish group, ‘race’ for the Jamaicans and both ‘race’ language for the Somalis. Receipt of social assistance was an important barrier for all three groups, not only because of the stigma attached to being on welfare but also the request by many landlords for first and last months rent. Household size was a particular barrier for the Somalis and gender was viewed as important, especially for female headed single parent families, in the Jamaican and Somali groups. In several instances the groups face multiple barriers that are cumulative in nature. This is especially true for the Somali community which suffers from the multiple disadvantages of language, racial discrimination, and discrimination against large families and single parent female headed households. The outcome of these barriers is fewer choices in the housing market, fewer locational choices within the city, overcrowding, and overpayment for accommodation. The strategies that the groups use to overcome these barriers are numerous and include reliance on churches and other community groups as well as networks of friends and relatives, and in extreme cases, hiding the children. With the recent election of a neo-conservative government in Ontario, the housing choices of low income new immigrants will become even more constrained. Development of most new social housing was stopped in 1995 and social assistance payments were cut by more than twenty percent so that welfare recipients now have less money to spend on housing and other essentials.

References


