

Engaging Citizens in Sustainable Development Policy in Regional Planning:

*A Comparative Study of the Regional Municipalities of York (Ontario)
and Wood Buffalo (Alberta)*

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For my Mother,

And in Loving Memory of my Father

*Some people when they are on the earth occupy only the space of a tree,
but when they leave,
they leave the space of a forest.*

—Anne Dale

FOREWORD

This Major Research Paper (MRP) explores whether there has been appropriate and adequate response from the Regional Municipalities of York (Ontario) and Wood Buffalo (Alberta) to the change in social composition that has occurred through immigration in terms of public engagement and consultation in the development and implementation process of their respective Integrated Community Sustainability Plans. These two municipalities have witnessed a significant increase in population growth through migration over the past 20 years; and this growth is expected to continue in the foreseeable future. This paper will aim to fill the knowledge gap that currently exists within the literature as it pertains to how municipalities respond to the changes in direct migration settlement patterns in Canada in regards to citizen engagement and consultation in the planning process of sustainability planning policy and sustainable development. As such, this paper will act as a starting point for further research and discussion because appropriate and adequate public engagement and consultation is important in any planning process, especially with communities that have a diverse population, as this ensures that the process is democratic and meaningful in its engagement and consultation.

The Plan of Study that I developed over the course of my studies in the Master of Environmental Studies Planning Program provides the framework and guidance for this MRP. The three core components of the Plan of Study are urban-regional planning, sustainability policy, and “ethnoburbs”, which are discussed in the paper. Under each component there are learning objectives that I have achieved through the theoretical, experiential and practical aspects of the program. This MRP will help accomplish the following learning objectives: 1.1. To gain a better understanding of the current policy trends in regional planning and governance; 2.2. To attain specific examples of how two regional municipalities in two Canadian provinces develop and implement sustainability policies; and 3.2. To explore how useful the term “ethnoburb” is in describing municipalities with a high concentration of ethnic minorities. Furthermore, this MRP will satisfy the final requirement for the following: the Master’s degree in Environmental Studies (Planning Program), the Canadian Institute of Planners membership, and the Graduate Diploma in Democratic Administration.

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores whether changes in direct settlement patterns by recent visible minority immigrants influence the development and implementation of sustainability planning policy—the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP)—for two regional municipalities in Canada—York (Ontario) and Wood Buffalo (Alberta). Since 2005, having ICSPs has been required in Canada; furthermore, it has become a well-documented fact that Canada's current population growth is largely attributed to migration by ethnic visible minority immigrants. While historically, immigrants settled in traditional urban areas (i.e. Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver), recent immigrants are increasingly directly settling in suburban regions. As such, sustainability and sustainable development are the site of policy and politics at which this study will examine public engagement and consultation practices of the two regional municipalities, in regards to their changing social composition. Specifically, this study is interested in whether there has been culturally appropriate and adequate response by the two regional municipalities to the change in social composition that has occurred through migration by recent visible ethnic minority immigrants in terms of public engagement and consultation in the development and implementation process of their respective ICSPs.

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INTRODUCTION

As a settler nation, Canada is a nation of immigrants. The nation's social fabric has been enriched by a constant influx of immigration, at varying rates and with marked intensity in the last sixty years. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2013: 40), Canada proportionately has one of the highest rates of annual immigration flow among OECD members, accounting for “roughly 0.7% of its population of 35 million.” Currently, an increasing number of recent immigrants entering Canada are creating a new settlement pattern that is visible in the outer suburbs of the largest Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs)—Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver—and within the Arctic and Sub-Arctic region (from herein referred to as “the Polar region”). Although immigration by ethnic visible minority¹ immigrants into the Polar region is a relatively new phenomenon, largely due to natural resource development (Damas, 2002; Huskey and Southcott, 2010; Pearce et al., 2012), it has a long and varied history within the Toronto CMA. However, it needs to be noted that contemporary immigrant settlement patterns within the Toronto CMA have generally differed than those of previous immigrants, which can be attributed to the fact that since the new millennium the majority of immigrants are coming into Canada under the “economic immigrant class” (Antecol, Cobb-Clark, and Trejo, 2002; Ferrer, Picot and Riddell, 2012: 2). Today's increase of economic class immigrants is reflective of current state immigration policy. This increase has also led to a shift from Europe to Asia as the major geographic source of immigrants (See Appendix A) (Wang and Lo, 2005; Aydermir, 2011; Alboim and Cohl, 2012 Triadafilopoulos, 2013:16). Current economic class immigrants are relatively more affluent than they have been historically, and they are largely constituted of ethnic visible minorities. This new pattern of direct settlement by contemporary ethnic visible minority immigrants into the suburbs² of the Toronto CMA is a

distinctive urban form, which Wei Li (1998) has coined “ethnoburb”. The concept of “ethnoburb” can also be extended to areas of the Polar region where there is suburban style development.

Li defines an “ethnoburb” as: “ethnic clusters of residential areas and business districts in large metropolitan areas... [they] are multiethnic communities in which one ethnic group has a significant concentration” (1998:479). Ethnoburbs, unlike traditional inner-city enclaves, are the result of economic strength, not of economic and social marginalization. This is echoed by Lo’s assertion that, “generally affluent newcomers prefer to settle into modern homes with generous living and green spaces in outer suburbs” (2006: 84). The suburbanization of the recent ethnic visible minority immigrant population is expected to be a continuing trend for the next three-decades, as highlighted by *Proposed Amendment 2* (2012) to the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006*. *Proposed Amendment 2* (2012) articulates that immigration will continue to be a major driver of growth well into 2041 within Ontario, particularly in the GTA, and immigrants will largely settle in suburban areas. The vast majority of future immigrants will continue to be ethnic visible minorities from a smaller pool of “sending countries”, mostly from Asia (Challinor, 2011). Furthermore, the Canadian Government has significantly increased its investment within the Polar region since 2007 and has “worked closely with territorial and Aboriginal leaders, Northerners and partners in the circumpolar Arctic to ensure that the [Canadian] North achieves its full promise as a vibrant region” (Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, 2011). This is outlined in *Canada's Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future, 2009*, which proposes the continued development of natural resources that exist within the region. As such, due to the increased development of mines and oil and gas reserves, the Polar region has “experienced considerable international migration of people

seeking work in resource extraction and service sectors”, causing the population of the Polar region to grow by approximately 13% between 2000 and 2010, which is “at a faster rate than Canada as a whole” (Heleniak and Bogoyavlenskiy, 2013). This level of growth is expected to continue in the Polar region. The direct settlement of the recent ethnic visible minority immigrant population into the suburbs of the Toronto CMA and the Polar region is in contrast to historical settlement patterns and, for this reason, is presenting a new set of planning policy challenges, particularly to sustainable development. This has led the federal government to mandate the development of Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs) by all municipalities in Canada in order to provide a policy framework that would guide sustainable development.

This paper will explore whether the change in direct settlement patterns by recent ethnic immigrants influences the engagement and consultation practices of two regional municipalities: the Regional Municipality of York, which is a suburban municipality in the Toronto CMA, and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, which is located within the Polar region in Northern Alberta. In particular, this paper will investigate whether there has been culturally appropriate and adequate response by the two municipalities to the change in social composition that has occurred through migration in terms of public engagement and consultation in the development and implementation process of their respective Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs), the *York Region Sustainability Strategy: Towards a Sustainable Region* and the *Envision Wood Buffalo Plan*. Furthermore, the paper will examine why the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo—which are different in terms of their political, social and economic structures—are presented with a similar dilemma of how to manage economic and population growth while preserving the integrity of ecologically sensitive areas that surround

them. In this respect, sustainable development is the site of policy and politics at which this study will examine citizen engagement practices of the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo.

This paper begins with a brief review of the previous literature regarding sustainable development, stakeholder engagement, and ethnoburbs. It will then describe the method and methodology used for this research. Next, it discusses the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo in terms of geography, economic activity, and social composition, with particular attention given to describing the recent ethnic immigrant populations of each municipality. As such, it will be suggested that the concept of ethnoburb can be extended to the two municipalities. Then, the paper will discuss the research findings from the interviews conducted with community leaders and municipal officials in the two municipalities. The paper will continue with a discussion and will make recommendations that were uncovered from the findings for how the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo can improve their public engagement and consultation approaches and methods in regards to their respective ethnic visible minority immigrant populations. Finally, the paper will conclude with possible future areas of research in respect to stakeholder engagement and sustainability planning policy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable Development

The concept of “sustainable development” and “sustainability” have “emerged as a new normative orientation” (Kemp and Martens, 2007: 1) in the past decade, sweeping through many movements around the world. As Kemp and Martens (Ibid.) state, “[t]he idea of sustainable development or sustainability [...] has] come to be formulated as a *different kind* of growth, one that is not harmful to the environment, bringing worldwide wealth and health.” As such, strategic action for sustainability is occurring in various fields ranging from economic development to physical and social planning. However, definitions of sustainability and effective approaches to achieving it are unclear (Pugh, 1996: ix; Villanueva, 1997: 154; Mozaffar, 2001; Redclift, 2005; Atkinson, 2008; Bell and Morse, 2013:2-13). This idea is supported by Lele (1991:607) who asserts that sustainable development “is in real danger of becoming a cliché like appropriate technology—a fashionable phrase that everyone pays homage to but nobody cares to define.”

The ever increasing literature on sustainable development raises important questions about reigning cultural paradigms and values: environmental advocates stress environmental sustainability; economic development experts focus on economic sustainability; and those in the human development sector stress cultural and social sustainability. For this reason, as Robinson (2004: 374) asserts, “[given] the plethora of competing definitions [...] any attempt to define the concept precisely, even if it were possible, would have the effect of excluding those whose views that were not expressed in that definition.” Furthermore, because the knowledge production for the concepts of sustainable development and sustainability arise from social consensus, they need to account for the combined inherent complexity and interconnectedness of social, economic, ecological, and technological development while integrating “tacit knowledge” from a

variety of scientific and societal actors (Voss and Kemp, 2006: 10). This reinforces the assertion made by Sneddon, Howarth and Norgaard (2006: 254) that it is important to “enact a politics of sustainability,” whereby “scholars, practitioners and political actors embrace a plurality of approaches to and perspectives on sustainability.” This would ensure an interdisciplinary approach when trying to prioritize the multiple and symbiotic elements of the concepts. In addition, it should be noted that for many, it is appropriate to use the terms “sustainability” and “sustainable development” interchangeably, while others would argue that they are distinct in their meaning whereby “sustainability” is an ultimate goal or destination and “sustainable development” is the framework that is followed to achieve it (Harding, 2006: 233).

The modern environmental movement can be traced back to Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962), which illustrated the harmful effects of synthetic chemicals on biological systems. The popular mainstream environmental movement can be related to the conservation movement to set aside protected natural areas and with efforts to reduce air and water pollution through governmental policy and regulation of industry (Dunlap and Merting, 1991; Shabecoff, 1996; Dowie, 1996; Shabecoff, 2003; Gottlieb, 2005; Straughan and Pollak, 2008). Since Carson’s publication there have been numerous studies and other publications on the topic. This includes landmark publications like *The Limits of Growth* (Meadows et al., 1974) and *Our Common Future* (1987), published by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), which is the United Nation entity more commonly referred to as the Bruntland Commission. The Bruntland Commission popularized the concept of sustainable development as forms of development that allow people “to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987: 8). Even before the Bruntland Commission, the conceptual development of sustainability and the first use of

“sustainable development” emerged in 1980 through the launch of the *World Conservation Strategy- Living Resource Conservation for Sustainable Development* by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The *World Conservation Strategy* was the first to introduce the concept of sustainable development and to use “sustainable” in relation to human use of the natural environment. Furthermore, in the introduction of the *World Conservation Strategy*, the IUCN (1980) argues that: “We have not inherited the earth from our parents, we have borrowed it from our children,” which introduced the notion of inter-generational equity which has become a key element in any definition of the concepts of sustainability and sustainable development.

Currently, the concept of sustainable development as a source of mainstream political and intellectual discourse is evident through its incorporation into the policy agenda of the United Nations, the adoption of its terminology into the goals of international organizations such as the World Bank, and the development of policy and organizations at all levels of government (Giddings, Hopwood and O’Brien, 2002; Castro, 2004). It has forced a variety of economic, environmental, social and political actors, including ordinary citizens to examine the values and goals of social, environmental and economic development (Logan and Moltch, 1987; Mikesell, 1992; Giddings, Hopwood and O’Brien, 2002; Castro, 2004; Redclift, 2005; Harding, 2006; Seyfang and Smith, 2007). As such, what defines sustainable development is neither an evolutionary nor a benign “win-win” process; it is a conflictual process, where groups with different agendas and abilities battle to shape the landscape (Logan and Moltch, 1987; Munda 1997; Conelly, 2007; Jordan, 2008; Meadowcroft, 2009). For this, it can be understood that any effort given to developing and implementing a sustainable development initiative emerges from a

broader set of arrangements that shape politics. Hence, actors can be distinguished by their concern or role in the landscape (Baker, 2005: 22; Dryzek, 2005:146). As Seyfang and Smith (2007:1) aptly note, “[e]verybody, it appears, is committed to sustainable development. But not everybody is seeking sustainable development in the same way,” such that there are a variety of discursive interpretations of the concept. This coincides with Hemple’s observation that:

“the symbol of sustainability is sufficiently ambiguous to be embraced by diverse interests, yet coherent enough to inspire movement in a particular direction [. . .] it’s potential may depend more on strategic uses of ambiguity than on conceptual precision and clarity” (1999:44).

However, regardless of where one is on the sustainable development continuum, contemporary society has broadly conceptualized it as the best way to address the complex and interrelated anthropogenic-induced environmental concerns and socio-economic issues. Furthermore, it has been embraced as a process that is derived from a vision of society based on balancing wealth-generating goals with social, cultural, and economic welfare goals (Harris, 2000; Reisch, 2001; Waas, Verbruggen and Wright, 2010; Reid, 2013). This conceptualization of sustainable development has been a guiding framework within land use planning and one of the ways sustainability manifests itself in the planning process (Krizek and Powers, 1996).

Considering the tendency for communities to grow as active participants in the management and use of economic, environmental and social resources (Ciegisa and Gineitiene, 2008: 107), it is not surprising that they have become important sites where sustainable development is manifested within policy and politics. Globally, there has been advocacy for sustainable land use practices and sustainable development has been considered a new planning agenda at all levels of government (Vitousek et al., 1997; Beatley and Manning, 1998, Raco, 2005). In the United States of America there have been several initiatives led by individual states

to develop sustainability programs to mobilize communities to rethink and alter land use practices from environmentally impactful sprawl development (Krizek and Power, 1996). In countries such as Holland and New Zealand, national legislation has been adopted mandating that local plans integrate key principles of sustainable development (Mega, 1996; Berke et al., 1997). Similarly, in Canada municipal governments have been federally legislated to develop sustainability plans based on a four-pillar model of sustainability (Planning for Sustainable Canadian Communities Roundtable, 2005). However, as Naess (2001: 505) stresses, land use planning is inherently in conflict with the goals and requirements of sustainable development. This inherent conflict is due the fact that planning practitioners balance “at least three conflicting interests: to ‘grow’ the economy, distribute this growth fairly and in the process not degrade the ecosystem” (Campbell, 1996: 297). Campbell (Ibid.) has illustrated this as a triangle where the three “E”s: environment, economy, and equity are at the points of the triangle and the conflicts are presented along each axis due to the contradictions between each goal (see Appendix B). The “development conflict” exists between social equity and environmental preservation because of the wealth generation goals for people through economic growth while protecting the quality of the natural environment through growth management. The “property conflict” arises between economic growth and equity due to tension that exists in the uses of property as both a public good and a private resource, and the “resource conflict” manifests because of the competing claims that arise between economic and ecological utility on the consumption and preservation of natural resources.

Campbell’s (Ibid.) triangle reaffirms the idea articulated by Ciegisa and Gineitiene (2008) that various aspects of the economic, environmental and social fabric of human settlement are sacrificed through the planning process. However, it is also through the planning process that

“new visions of liveable [and sustainable] communities” are being developed and that planning practitioners “are working on the frontiers of sustainability and livability practice” (Godchalk, 2007: 5). As has been previously noted, this includes the development and implementation of programs and policies that are mandated from all levels of government.

Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs)

Since 2005, having a sustainability plan has been promoted in Canada through federal and provincial Gas Tax Agreements (GTAs) (Planning for Sustainable Canadian Communities Roundtable, 2005). Known as the “New Deal for Cities and Communities”, these agreements were established as a mechanism for the federal government to return a portion of fuel tax, up to \$11.4 billion by 2013, to municipal governments to achieve measurable progress towards sustainability through infrastructure upgrading and replacement, as well as community sustainability projects. Here, it is important to note that, as Gattinger (2008) articulates, jurisdictionally the relationship between provincial and territorial governments and the federal government in Canada is complex; though the provincial governments are responsible for their respective municipal governments, the federal government can intervene in “urban” related issues such as infrastructure, public housing, and public transportation. In this regard, the federal government’s External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities (EACCC) developed an approach to sustainable development for municipalities based on the premise that global sustainability challenges need a response through actions that are “local and shaped by a strong sense of place” (EACCC, 2006: 10). As such, to be eligible for the fuel tax fund, municipalities were to develop an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) that would be in place by 2010. An ICSP is defined in the Municipal Funding Agreement as:

“A long-term plan, developed in consultation with community members that provides direction for the community to realize sustainability objectives including environmental, culture, social and economic objectives” (Planning for Sustainable Canadian Communities Roundtable, 2005: 4).

The ICSPs, based on a four-pillar model of sustainability, “seek to integrate and to share knowledge and solutions, [so that] communities can better understand their future and work collectively towards achieving their goals” (Ibid.: 6). The four pillars of sustainability of the ICSPs—social, cultural, economic, and environmental—have several objectives: to save resources, to enhance capacity—namely socially and economically—and to meet community needs, to develop a strong and creative community, to help manage and develop policy more effectively, create greater community cohesion, and to stay relevant with increasingly changing priorities. These objectives will help municipalities in Canada “to translate knowledge, concerns and hopes into action,” and “enable communities to plan and manage their assets, services and resources in order to achieve identifiable outcomes, deliver services and address their priorities” (Ibid.: 9). Furthermore, while municipalities have been encouraged to draw upon their existing plans, the ICSPs represent an important step in the direction and method of long-term planning for sustainable communities.

As highlighted by Duxbury and Jeannotte, the ICSPs brought together formal institutions to foster collaboration and coordination in trying to develop sustainability planning policy and bridged the gap in the jurisdictional ambiguities that existed historically when dealing with “culture” which was “considered a ‘shared’ jurisdiction and sustainability [which is] not mentioned in the constitution” (2012: 7). In addition, ICSPs are meant to align other municipal plans and documents into one integrated decision-making framework and to meet a series of milestones throughout the planning and implementation process. Important aspects of the milestones include “establishing a sustainability vision, analyzing the current situation,

developing sustainability goals and targets, developing an implementation plan, [and] reporting on the initiative”, with a significant emphasis on engaging and consulting various stakeholders, which includes citizens throughout the process (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2014). Citizen involvement is a fundamental and legislated aspect in any planning process in Canada; as such the Planning for Sustainable Canadian Communities Roundtable (2004: 5) encourages a collaborative mindset through various participatory techniques when developing and implementing ICSPs. This collaborative and participatory model of developing and implementing ICSPs allows for new forms of participatory planning, which ensures “that the plan is grounded in the pluralistic socio-economic and bio-physical contexts of the community” (Ling, Hanna and Dale, 2009: 231).

Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

As Paehlke and Torgerson (1990: 51) state, citizen involvement through “democratic mobilization is essential to the [successful] achievement” of developing and implementing planning policies. Hence, an engagement model that includes increased and continuous public participation, deliberation, and negotiation is a key aspect in developing and implementing community plans. The “trend away from expert-driven policy-making models towards processes that facilitate two-way information flow,” has been witnessed since the 1960s in order to re-establish citizen confidence in government and create “more robust, effective and equitable planning” (Masuda et al., 2008: 360). This move away from the top-down style of engagement that historically existed within the planning practice and process comes from a strong belief that the democratizing of the planning process allows for “better coordination and implementation of programs [...] as many of the problems being addressed [...] have their roots in local activities” (Ciegisa and Gineitiene, 2008: 111), and that often it “can transform conflicts of interests into

situations [... where there is] mutual understanding and agreement” (Naess, 2001: 514).

Furthermore, the move away from the technocratic elements while putting a greater emphasis on alternative models of consultation and information dissemination by planning practitioners ensures that decisions are effective, acceptable, and appropriate solutions developed locally that rely upon local knowledge and participation of those who are most affected by decisions (Kingston et al.: 2000: 112; Roseland, 2005; Pratchett et al., 2009). As such, community participation, deliberation, and negotiation are important elements because when “citizens can engage in authentic dialogue where all are equally empowered and informed and where they listen and are heard respectfully and when they are,” change within the community can occur, new ideas can be learned and perhaps most importantly there is a recognition that “others’ views are legitimate” (Innes and Booher, 2004: 428).

As stated by Arnstein (1969), community engagement is commonly assessed in terms of level of involvement, ranging from the least (non-participation) to the most involved (citizen empowerment). The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2, 2007) identifies five levels of increasing participation with different communication methods associated with them: informing (fact sheets, websites or open houses), consulting (public comment or meetings, focus groups, and surveys), involving (workshops or deliberative polling), collaborating (citizen advisory committees, consensus building, and participatory decision-making) and empowering citizens (citizen juries, ballots or delegated decisions). Each level, and the techniques used within it, corresponds to a different degree of information or knowledge sharing, from one-way information transfer to collaboration. Communication is a crucial element of information or knowledge sharing— especially in establishing transparency, accountability, and legitimacy— and it occurs through interactions of individuals and groups within social networks (Ochocka,

Janzen and Nelson 2002; Pomeroy and Douvere, 2008). The relationships formed within a community are characterised as strong ties or bonding relationships and are “simultaneously a cause and an effect” (Portes, 1998:19) and are distinguished from the “weak ties” or “bridging relationships” that are formed with external forces (Granovetter, 1982: 222). It is important to note that even though bonding relationships or strong ties are important in generating social cohesion and social capital, they can also be a challenge in terms of community change (Newman and Dale, 2005: 481).

The institutional redesign from “government” to “governance”, or in other words from vertical and hierarchical to more horizontal and cooperative forms of “steering” in community building has been promoted globally by a growing number of civic, academic and civil organizations (Boase, 2000; Wampler and Avritzer, 2004; Bingham, Nabatchi and O’Leary, 2005). This shift to governance has led to changes in policy development and implementation at all levels of government to allow for greater stakeholder involvement and to cope with “political conflicts surrounding development projects, siting-decisions, new technology, risk, environmental impacts, and the distribution of the associated burdens and benefits” (Holzinger 2001: 71). These changes namely refer to participatory mechanisms that are considered suitable for policy development and implementation processes; whereby participatory mechanisms utilize a variety of tools and techniques, including stakeholder roundtables, deliberative opinion polls, town meetings, and referenda (Insua et al., 2007: 167; IAP2, 2007). As Weale (2001) delineates, these mechanisms are part of the public participation discourse that is meant to make citizens more “enlightened” through making expert knowledge more approachable and engaging citizens both as contributors and accepters of decisions and policy. This increases the range of roles that citizens can play other than just being considered in the passive role of “voter”. While

governments and bureaucrats make “thousands of decisions” that actively affect the daily lives of citizens, historically citizens have only had “one instrument to control these decisions: the vote” and this only happened during elections (Przeworski, Stokes and Manin, 1999: 50). For this reason, citizens—often viewed as “consumers” or “clients”—can become more fully involved in the production of public policies through participatory mechanisms which ensure that they have a more active role in the decision-making process (Dutil, 2008).

Participatory mechanisms should not just aim to satisfy legislated requirements, but also to create an environment where there is community support for the policies and to improve the overall quality of the policies in both the development and implementation process. As Gbikpi and Grote (2002: 23) aptly note:

“[Participation is] definitely less a matter of democracy in the sense of institutionalizing a set of procedures for electing those in charge of the policy-making, than it is a kind of second best solution for approaching the question of effective participation of the persons likely to be affected by the policies designed. . . . [P]articipation can be effective in the realisation of policy objectives because it can help to overcome problems of implementation by considering motives and by fostering the willingness of policy addressees to comply as well as through the mobilisation of the knowledge of those affected.”

In other words, participation allows for “the public at large to debate the recommendations of government employees and to reject [or accept] them when they think it is appropriate to do so” (Frug, 1990: 570). It is here that a reciprocal relationship can form between citizens and bureaucrats whereby bureaucrats feel a greater sense of accountability and obligation to explain and inform citizens about policy and decisions being made, while citizens are encouraged to participate in the decision-making process and become informed about the issues being decided upon (Schedler, 1999: 14). Bureaucratic behaviour and responsiveness to facilitate strong relationships with citizens is an impactful element in nurturing citizen participation, which is

influenced by both the institutional constraints in which they work and their own personal beliefs and actions (Potoski, 2002; Vigoda, 2002; West, 2004; Meier and O'Toole, 2006; Byer, 2007; Yang and Callahan, 2007; Handley and Howell-Moroney, 2010). Therefore, as Byer (2007) states, bureaucratic responsiveness to citizen participation within the planning process can be articulated through three ethical perspectives of bureaucratic responsiveness: 1) Control-Centered Ethics, where bureaucrats are “constrained by rules, regulations, organizational cultures, and leadership and authority structures”, which hinders their ability to “interpret and act upon their environment freely”(Ibid.: 483); 2) Discretionary Ethics, where bureaucrats “have discretion to choose right or wrong, and they are challenged to decide ethical and behavioural questions where what is more good than something else is not easily discernible” (Ibid.: 486); and 3) Deliberative Ethics, where bureaucrats “change their thoughts and behaviours according to the consensus-based decisions of their stakeholders,” and “seek to balance between multiple, potentially competing demands” (Ibid.:487-8). More succinctly, citizen-government interactions are largely governed by the decisions made by bureaucrats and their responsiveness to the needs of citizens and their preference for participation and engagement. Within this context, bureaucrats play a fundamental role in ensuring the legitimization of public policy through citizen support or obedience (Fung, 2006: 70).

To gain greater consensus and legitimacy from citizens, it is important to move away from the method of citizen engagement and consultation based on one-way communication and commonly viewed as a superficial method of public participation (Wang, 2001; Adams, 2004). Therefore, to grow and sustain public engagement it is imperative to develop methods of engagement that go beyond exchange and expert-driven approaches towards more collaborative and citizen-centric approaches (Lukensmeyer and Torres, 2006). This furthers the assertion

made by Cooper, Bryer and Meek (2006) that there are a variety of approaches to civic engagement from adversarial approaches on one end of the spectrum to deliberative approaches on the other end. Where with adversarial approaches there are few, if any, opportunities for “full and open discussion of ideas” while with deliberative approaches the “core components [...] are dialogue among different types of people, joint action and share responsibility for outcomes” (Ibid.:82). Therefore, deliberative and collaborative approaches, which have a history spanning since ancient Greece, are seen as essential and as the cornerstones of representative government and participatory democracy (Fishkin, 1995; Page, 1996; Gastil, 2000; Chambers, 2003; Delli Carpini, Cook and Jacobs, 2004; Wampler and Avritzer, 2004). As such, six reasons have been identified that highlight the importance of deliberative and collaborative public participation, beyond the fact that participation is often a legislative requirement (Innes and Booher, 2004: 422-3): 1) To ensure that the decisions that are being made by decision-makers reflect public consensus and preference; 2) Incorporate local knowledge provided by citizens to improve decisions; 3) To advance fairness and justice for groups that are least advantaged and marginalized; 4) Legitimize and democratize decisions; 5) Helps to build civil society; and lastly, 6) To “create an adaptive, self-organizing polity” that has the capability of addressing issues effectively and in an informed manner. In this regard, as Hanna (2000) has aptly suggests, information is one of the key issues during participation, specifically who has control of it and whether it is legitimate and trustworthy. However, through deliberative and collaborative approaches to public engagement, stakeholders can agree on principles and practices such as joint fact finding that help build trust amongst stakeholders and enhance channels of communication, which ultimately lead to improved, legitimized and democratically developed

decisions and policy (Yankelovich, 1991; Innes et al., 1994; Carpenter, 1999; Weeks, 2000; Fischer, 2002; Connick and Innes, 2003).

Here, it is also important to stress that public engagement needs to ensure a diversity of participants, which addresses the nature of participants in terms of social, economic, political, and cultural dimensions but also the expertise they bring (Fischer, 2002a: 131). As DeSantis and Hill (2004) have found, there is a strong correlation between citizen participation and citizen characteristics—individuals who actively seek engagement opportunities, who read newspapers, have high levels of political efficacy, and who are older. Therefore, “[t]he challenge before [bureaucrats] is to reach beyond the older and most-engaged residents,” so that engagement and consultation with citizens is reflective of the total population and not just a segment of the population (Ibid.: 172). This is especially important in communities with large recent ethnic visible minority immigrant populations, as they are often marginalized within the decision-making process due to various factors including socioeconomic and cultural differences (Andrulis, Siddiqui and Gantner, 2007) and language barriers (Schachter and Liu, 2005). As the cultural and social diversity of local populations grow, it is imperative that any engagement approach focuses on providing the required accommodation for divergent groups within communities (Qadeer, 1997), and to ensure that there are adequate and appropriate methods that take into account group needs and preferences. As Qadeer (2009: 2) articulates, “the first test of accommodating [social and] cultural diversity is to make the [engagement] process inclusive by facilitating and actively seeking inputs from ethnic communities [...] making the decision-making processes inclusive and open.” Actively seeking and facilitating engagement from diverse groups can be difficult—due to various institutional constraints such as associated economic or temporal costs—however, it is fundamental to ensure that the level of civic

engagement is reflective of the total population which has the benefit of producing and increasing social capital especially in increasingly heterogeneous communities. Here, social capital is used to refer to features of network structures—these include social norms and structures, mutual obligations and trust, and information exchange—that promote collaboration, interaction and a sense of social cohesion and civic belonging amongst members of a community, which in turn enhances the quality and quantity of participation by groups and individuals (Coleman, 1990). In this regard, in communities “with more social capital and more of a civic sense, [participation] rates are likely to be higher as residents do not pursue only their own narrow self-interest” (Costa and Kahn, 2003: 106). Furthermore, there is a stronger sense of satisfaction amongst citizens with local government (Box and Musso, 2004), improved service delivery (Alford, 2002), and enhanced acceptance of policy and decisions among stakeholders (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000).

Ethnoburbs

Historically, research on ethnic immigrant minority groups in urban cores has followed the concept relating spatial distance to social distance, connecting evolving settlement patterns to socioeconomic, spatial, cultural, and political assimilation rooted in the work of Park and Burgess (1921) and Wirth (1928). A formal theorizing of spatial assimilation began with Massey (1985), who largely adopts the earlier ecological model of spatial succession and invasion proposed by Park, Burgess and McKenzie (1925). This model predicts that with their acculturation into the host society and accumulation of economic resources, immigrants disperse from their initial settlement in inner-city ethnic³ enclaves towards better quality housing in suburban neighbourhoods. The term “ethnic enclave” is utilized to connote various types of

ethnic congregation at the local neighbourhood level; they exist when neighbourhoods are found to contain a large proportion of ethnic populations (Zhang, 2008). As such, ethnic enclaves can be explained as a general notion to refer to the geographic concentration and congregation of ethnic groups in space. Ethnic congregation is seen as a spatial outcome of marginalization, or as a manifestation of ethnic isolation, associated with the assimilation process of international migrants (Dunn, 1998). The formation of an ethnic enclave is conceptualized as social and spatial segregation from the host society's majority, either by socioeconomic necessity or by preferential choice. Functionally, ethnic enclaves serve as shelters for new immigrants in the host society, usually existing in economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods and containing a variety of ethnic-related resources, such as places of worship (Fong et al., 2005). Classical assimilation theories have long stressed this transitory nature of ethnically distinct urban enclaves as "springboards for immigrants' eventual integration into the mainstream" (Zhou et al., 2009: 77). Toronto's Little Italy or Greektown are examples of spatial assimilation: places in the urban fabric where immigrants "toiled to enable their children to "melt" into suburbia and become 'indistinguishably' [Canadian]" (Ibid.). However, this urban-to-suburban residential mobility model fits more closely with the settlement patterns of European immigrants; the current immigrant settlement patterns differ. While immigrants continue to arrive in traditional urban core areas of Canada's largest CMAs, they have also begun to disperse from these established areas and migrate directly to new destinations within metropolitan regions (Hempstead, 2007; Massey, 2008). Studies in the United States have characterized this increasingly decentralized residential pattern as "melting pot suburbs" (Frey, 2001), "suburban immigrant nation" (Hardwick, 2008) and of course as "ethnoburbs" (Li, 1998). Instead of concentrating in high-density, low-quality, inner-city housing, these new immigrants are moving directly to suburban

areas. This same trend is visible in the Canadian context (Merritt, 2007; Chan, 2012; Wang and Zhong, 2013).

Global economic restructuring has moved humans and capital, leading to vast changes in local economies of sending and receiving states. In many sending countries, this “global economic restructuring has extensively altered the structure of local economies and opportunities for social mobility,” causing people and capital to move within and across borders in ways that “render neoclassical economic theories of international migration inadequate” (Zhou et al., 2009: 78). Wage differentials and access to better employment opportunities are no longer the main push factors for people to move; as a result contemporary international migration has been significantly reshaped. This reshaping is evident in the Canadian context when in 1967 the Canadian government shifted from a "race based" immigration policy to a universal point system based primarily on socioeconomic criteria and labour market demands (Ferrer, Picot, and Riddell, 2012; Triadafilopoulos, 2013). Managerial, professional, technical, service and clerical occupations grew in importance, while manufacturing, labour and agricultural occupations became less common. This new policy opened doors to an influx of highly-skilled, educated and racialized migrants, who had a substantial impact on meeting the demand of the labour market (Wang and Lo, 2003). These immigrants tended to be “more educated and skilled than early pioneer ethnic settlers. [And thus,] the composition of the Canadian [migrant] diaspora⁴ began to drastically change” (Li and Lee, 2005: 647). Contemporary immigrants still include some low-skilled working migrants with minimal resources, however there is a predominance of highly-skilled and educated, resource-rich migrants creating “new modes of immigrant settlement, the most remarkable of which is the detour from the central-city ethnic enclaves to middle-class suburbia”(Zhou et al., 2009: 78).

The rise of ethnic visible minority immigrants directly settling into suburban areas has been largely attributed to a different social process that primarily involves in-group attraction and purposive efforts in sustaining ethnic identity, and is not a result of ethnic behaviour stemming from structural and cultural constraint (Logan et al., 2002). The concept of “resurgent ethnicity⁵” (Ibid.), argues that all groups have a natural tendency to live close to co-ethnics and spatial behaviour of ethnic minorities to cluster is not necessarily an outcome of constraint but reflecting “a simple, natural ethnocentrism rather than out-group hostility or an effort to preserve relative status advantages” (Charles, 2003:182). For this reason, the increase of ethnic visible minority immigrants directly settling in Canadian suburban areas reflect both the “natural ethnocentrism” and the fact that more recent immigrants, especially those from Asia, are equipped with socioeconomic resources that allow them to choose where to live. It is here that the concept “ethnoburb” has been proposed to refer to an “ethnic suburb” as a hybrid of a traditional ethnic enclave and a typical suburb (Li, 1998). Li (Ibid.) uses the example of Los Angeles’ Chinese population to illustrate this spatial shift. Historically, the Chinese population was centered in downtown Chinatown; however in the 1960s the Chinese population began to suburbanize. While downtown Chinatown remained, suburban areas in San Gabriel Valley, in the American context, emerged with high concentrations of Chinese immigrants directly settling into them.

Unlike the traditional concept of the inner city ethnic enclave, typically perceived as socioeconomically deprived urban neighbourhoods concentrated with immigrants with low-skills and poor proficiency of the English language, these ethnoburbs are characterized by a strong presence of ethnic visible minority immigrant residents with professional or managerial jobs, ethnic visible minority immigrant-owned business districts, high levels of ethnic visible

minority participation in local politics, and a clear within-community social stratification (Ibid.). For this, ethnoburbs can be conceptualized as suburban areas with a high concentration of ethnic residents as well as ethnic business districts and networks. Although they are multiethnic communities, there is typically a significant concentration of one ethnic group (Ibid.). A feature that is particularly distinctive of ethnoburbs is their transnational character, especially in regard to the circulation of commodities and capital, aided by ethnic financial institutions providing various banking services. These financial institutions comprise of both local mainstream as well as foreign banks providing services that allow the ethnic migrants to become part of an “integrated economy” opposed to an “ethnic enclave economy” (Li and Dymski, 2007: 36). One additional aspect of “ethnoburbs” is the way they geographically differ from traditional ethnic enclaves found in urban cores, “unlike the sharp boundaries of ghettos and enclaves, the boundaries of ethnoburbs are fuzzy and largely arbitrary,” rather than blocks or sections of an area (Li, 2009: 46), in that ethnic visible minority immigrants may choose to congregate or be dispersed within their host communities. This new and emerging form of ethnic visible minority immigrant spatial settlement, coined as “ethnoburb”, can be extended to the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo based upon Li’s (1998) definition of the concept.

Research Contribution

Even with this wealth of research on sustainable development and stakeholder engagement, currently, there is a dearth of published studies examining how municipalities are responding to the changes in direct immigration settlement patterns in the Toronto CMA and the Canadian Polar region in terms of citizen engagement and consultation in the planning process of sustainability planning policy and sustainable development. For this reason this paper represents an attempt to bridge this knowledge gap and will contribute to the literature on sustainable

development and stakeholder engagement. By exploring how the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo engage and consult with recent ethnic⁶ visible minority immigrants during the development and implementation process of their respective Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs), the *York Region Sustainability Strategy: Towards a Sustainable Region* and the *Envision Wood Buffalo Plan*, this paper will act as a starting point for further discussion on how to appropriately and adequately engage the two regional municipalities' growing ethnic visible minority immigrant populations with ICSPs, and more broadly with regional planning policy. This has been a relatively unexplored aspect in public policy administration and urban-regional planning.

METHOD, METHODOLOGY, AND DATA COLLECTION

This research is a comparative study that is explanatory in nature. As Ragin notes, a comparative study is “interested in identifying the similarities and differences among macrosocial units”, such as the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo, which “provides the key to understanding, explaining, and interpreting diverse historical outcomes and processes and their significance for current institutional arrangements” (1987:6). In this regard, this research is a case-oriented study that explores how the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo which have different social, economic, and political conditions have a similar planning challenge: to develop in a sustainable manner while facing rapid population growth and change in social composition. Specifically, the study will consider the responsiveness of the public engagement and consultation methods employed by the two municipalities while developing and implementing their respective ICSPs to the needs and preferences of recent ethnic visible minority immigrant populations.

The study employs two stages of data collection. The first stage involves exploring how direct settlement by recent ethnic immigrants have affected growth within the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo. To do so, the paper explores data, reports, and other documents from the following sources: Statistics Canada, the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo, and other organizations and institutions. These sources provides the statistical evidence of the changes in social composition occurring in both municipalities. The second stage involves semi-structured interviews with two groups of informants from each municipality. The first group of informants consists of six municipal officials—politicians and bureaucrats—with recruitment aimed at individuals closely affiliated with knowledge of their respective regional municipality’s ICSP and/or engagement strategies. The second group of

informants consists of three community leaders from ethnic visible minority communities. The primary method of informant selection was through direct solicitation, or purposive sampling. Snowball sampling was used as a secondary method. During the interviews two types of questions were asked: 1) general questions about the participant; and 2) questions that elicited more detailed responses in relation to their perspective on the engagement and consultation processes and methods used in developing and implementing their regional municipality's ICSP. The first set of general questions were asked to allow the informants to become comfortable with the aim that they would be forthcoming in their responses for the second set of questions. Here, it is important to note that this research was reviewed by the York University Human Participants Review Sub-Committee and received approval from the York University Office of Research Ethics⁷.

A Note on Interviews

As Kvale (1996) mentions, the interview is a structured and purposeful conversation that goes beyond the impulsive exchange of everyday. It is an approach that obtains knowledge through careful listening and questioning. This paper employs qualitative interviewing as the method of interview. It is similar to standardized survey interviewing in this respect, but unlike the survey interview, the epistemology of the qualitative interview tends to be more constructionist than positivist. It is a kind of guided conversation in which the researcher listens “so as to hear the meaning” of what is being conveyed (Rubin and Rubin, 1995: 7). Interview participants are viewed as “meaning makers, not passive conduits for retrieving information from an existing vessel of answers” (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). The purpose of qualitative interviewing is to derive interpretations, not facts, from participant answers: it can be framed as a “speech event” (Mishler, 1986) or more substantively and interactionally, aiming to understand

the meaning of participants' experiences, life worlds, and their perspectives (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995).

Luff refers to perspectives as “fractured subjectivities” (1999:701). Applied to interviews, Luff's characterization suggests that participants do not respond from a stable and coherent position, but from varied perspectives. These perspectives included structured and historically grounded roles and hierarchies of society, particularly gender, race, and class (Campbell, 1998). This suggests that the perspectives relevant to the qualitative interview encompass the social positions that emerge in the interview: the participant's perspective may shift from one standpoint in his or her experience to another—from one identity to another (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). In this regard, there are different types of participants, including participant as ethnic, gendered, aged, classed, and even identified with a sexual community. As such, it is important to note that these are not only distinctive but also the various perspectives that can be taken by a single participant within a single interview or even at the same time (Ibid.). As Warren suggests (2000:184), perspective is significant, especially “where meaning making is center stage in the interpretive process” and when trying to accurately make sense of what has been articulated by participants.

THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITIES OF YORK AND WOOD BUFFALO

The Regional Municipality of York

The Regional Municipality of York is located within southern Ontario (See Appendix C), extending from the City of Toronto's northern boundary to the southern shore of Lake Simcoe, spanning an area of 1,762 square kilometers (York Region, 2013: 1). It is one of thirty upper-tier municipalities in Ontario⁸, and consists of nine lower-tier municipalities. Five of the lower-tier municipalities (Aurora, Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill and Vaughan) are classified as urban, while the other four (East Gwillimbury, Georgia, King and Whitchurch-Stouffville) are classified as rural. The land use split for the municipality is 45% farm land, 40% rural and 15 % urban development (Ibid.: 66), with 22,946 hectares of land remaining available for development within the designated settlement area of 63,133 hectares in total (Ontario Growth Secretariat, 2005: 31). In addition, the municipality has a large portion of environmentally significant lands comprising 44.2% of the region's total land area with 15.1% of these lands being fully protected by provincial and municipal legislation (Neptis Foundation, 2004: 6). These significant and protected lands include the Oak Ridges Moraine, considered one of Ontario's most significant landforms, and the Ontario Greenbelt, which wraps around the Greater Golden Horseshoe to protect ecologically sensitive areas and productive farmlands from urban development and sprawl (Ibid.). The Ontario Greenbelt is also the largest greenbelt in the world.

The Regional Municipality of York is the third fastest-growing region in Canada, with a population more than doubling between 1986 and 2001 (YRVAWCC, 2009: 3.1). Furthermore, its population increased 22.4% between 2001 and 2006 (York Region, 2007: 5), with an additional population increase of 15.7% between 2006 and 2011 (York Region, 2012: 8). In this regard, the municipality grew faster than Ontario (5.7%) and Canada (5.9%) during the same

time (York Region, 2014: 4). As of 2011, the total population surpassed the one million mark at 1,032,524 people. Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan account for 75% of the municipality's total population, and are a continued source of growth for the municipality, with 90% of the municipality's recent immigrants settling in these three lower-tier municipalities between 2006-2011 (Ibid.: 4-5). The provincial government forecasts that the Regional Municipality of York will grow by 66.8% (or 716,000 people) between 2011 and 2041 (Parker, 2013: 2), with immigration being "the most important determinant of population growth" (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2013: 11).

Since its creation in 1971, with a largely Canadian European and non-immigrant population of 169,000 people, the Regional Municipality of York has witnessed a dramatic change in its social composition (York Region, 2013:1). This change in social composition was most notable between 1991 and 2001: while the population of non-immigrants increased by 31%, the population of immigrants increased by 132% during the same time (YRVAWCC, 2009: 3.1). Furthermore, between 2001 and 2006, immigration accounted for 60% of growth in the region (York Region, 2008) and 63% of growth between 2006 and 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2012). In 2011, almost half (45%) of the Regional Municipality of York's population was composed of immigrants (Ibid.). Between 2006 and 2011, of the 47,725 immigrants that had settled in the municipality, 74% (or 35,170 people) came from Asia (Ibid.). The single largest share of source country was China (35% or 12,305 people) (Ibid.). The other top five source countries were (Ibid.): Iran (12.7% or 4,475 people), India (8.5% or 2,985 people), Philippines (8.4% or 2,970 people), Sri Lanka (6% or 2,095 people), and South Korea (5.1% or 1,810 people) (See Appendix D). As such, it is not surprising that the Regional Municipality of York has the fourth largest visible minority population in Canada at 37% of the total population and

65% of the total immigrant population (York Region, 2008). The recent immigrant population in the Regional Municipality of York is predominantly more highly skilled and educated than the total population, with 40% of those 15 years of age and older having attained a university degree compared to 26% of the total population (Lo et al., 2010: 4). The recent immigrant population is also resource-rich, and “bring a wealth of assets” including global networks and enterprises “that are key factors in [the] economic prosperity” of the region (York Region, 2011: 10).

Furthermore, 57% of these immigrants are in their prime working years (25 to 54 years of age), which is 12% higher than the total population, with 34% of full-time employees working in highly skilled occupations (Lo et al., 2010: 5).

The Regional Municipality of York is a comparatively affluent community with the second highest median household income in the Greater Toronto Area at \$89,100, which is above the median for Ontario (\$66,358) and Canada (\$61,072) (York Region, 2014: 7). The high median income is supported by the fact that the municipality has the most educated workforce among Canada’s largest municipalities, with 53% of those who have attained a post-secondary degree having majored in business administration, engineering, or information and computer sciences (York Region, 2010). In addition, 60% of the municipality’s total workforce work within the municipality and are supported by large industry clusters (York Region Economic Strategy, 2014). The industry clusters located within the Regional Municipality of York are: 1) Ontario’s second-largest business services, financial, and insurance clusters after the City of Toronto; 2) the second largest information and communication technology cluster in Canada; 3) North America’s third largest life sciences cluster; 4) Ontario’s second largest and Canada’s fourth largest advanced manufacturing hub; 5) Ontario’s second largest Solar PV industry cluster; 6) Canada’s third largest residential construction behind Vancouver and Toronto; and 7)

one of Canada's largest food industry clusters (Ibid.). Furthermore, in addition to the 45,000 local businesses (of which 97% are small to medium sized enterprises) (York Region, 2010a), there is a significant international presence in the municipality including the Canadian headquarters for foreign financial institutions such as the Bank of China, ICICI Bank, and Korea Exchange Bank (York Region, 2010). In this regard, the municipality is "at the heart of Ontario's knowledge economy" (Shoukri, 2014), as knowledge-based, financial, and technology driven industries are among the fastest growing economic sectors in the province.

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo was formed on April 1, 1995 as a result of the amalgamation of the City of Fort McMurray and Improvement District No. 143, and is one of five specialized municipalities⁹ in Alberta (Alberta Municipal Affairs, 2007). Spanning 68,454 square kilometers, the municipality covers 10% of the province's total area and is the second largest municipality in Canada (RMWB 2012: 1). It is located in the Northeastern part of Alberta stretching from the southern border of the Northwest Territories down to north central Alberta, and borders Saskatchewan to the east (See Appendix E). The municipality is composed of a Rural Service Area and an Urban Service Area and consists of eleven unincorporated hamlets, of which only one is considered urban. The ten hamlets that are classified as rural and compose the Rural Service Area are: Anzac, Conklin, Fort Chipewyan, Fort MacKay, Gregoire Lake Estates, Janvier South, Draper, Fort Fitzgerald, Mariana, and Sapræ Creek. Fort McMurray is the only hamlet classified as urban and composes the Urban Service Area. Nestled within the Canadian boreal forest, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has 49,165 square kilometers of Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs), where specific environmental consideration must be taken into account during any development activities (RMWB, 2008: 6). ESAs are defined by

Alberta Parks as “areas that are vital to the long-term maintenance of biological diversity, physical landscape features and/or other natural process at multiple spatial scales” and are classified by their level of significance: international, national, or provincial (2009: 1). Within the municipality there is one ESA of international significance, the Athabasca River Delta, which comprises 2,830 square kilometers of the municipality. In addition, there are 22 ESAs of national significance comprising 21,355 square kilometers and 64 that are of provincial significance comprising approximately 25,000 square kilometers (RMWB, 2008: 6-7).

Furthermore, Alberta’s longest river entirely within the province flows through the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo and accounts for 5% of the Mackenzie River Basin, which is the largest northward flowing river basin in North America and the primary North American source of freshwater to the Arctic Ocean (RAMP, 2014). Canada’s largest national park, Wood Buffalo National Park, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the World’s Largest Dark Sky Preserve is located north-west of the municipality. In this regard, the majority of land is not owned by the municipality which has made it difficult to accommodate the development needed for the type of growth it is currently experiencing (RMWB, 2008: 4).

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo also has one of the fastest growing populations in Canada. It has seen its rapid, intense growth from a population of about 2,500 people in 1960 to a permanent resident population of 77,136¹⁰ people (72,944 people in the Urban Service Area and 4,192 people in the Rural Service Area) in 2012 (RMWB, 2012: 1). In addition to the permanent resident population there is a non-permanent resident population, commonly referred to as the “shadow population”¹¹ of 39,271 people (Fillion, 2006). If both the permanent and non-permanent population figures are combined, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has a total population of 116,407 people (Ibid.). Since 1995, the municipality’s

population has “exploded”, with the population increasing two and a half times between 1996 and 2007 (from 35,213 people in 1996 to 89,167 people in 2007) (RMWB, 2008: 1). The population grew again by 32.1% between 2007 and 2012, which is almost triple the growth rate of Alberta at 10.8% and more than five times that of the nation during the same time period (PwC, 2013: 2). In addition, the municipality has had an average annual growth rate of 7% between 2000 and 2012 (Ibid.). The majority of this growth in population has occurred in the Urban Service Area (Fort McMurray) accounting for 71.2% of the overall growth between 2000 and 2012 (Ibid.). As such, the Urban Service Area accounts for 62.7% of the total population of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB, 2012: 1-2). The pattern of rapid growth that the municipality has witnessed is expected to continue well into the foreseeable future with a population increase of about 125,000 people in the next 15 years, bringing the total population to about 231,000 by 2030 (PwC, 2013: 5). Interprovincial and international migration will continue to be key drivers of population growth for the municipality.

Although over three-quarters (75.9%) of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo’s population self-identify as being Caucasian (which includes a range of European ancestry) with 85.4% identifying Canada as their country of origin (RMWB 2012: 54-58), visible minority immigrants play an important role in the population growth of the municipality. Between 2000 and 2010 international migrants accounted for two-thirds of the municipality’s total population growth (Finance Alberta, 2011: 7). Furthermore, with 14.6% of the total population stating that their country of origin was other than Canada, the immigrant population in the municipality is twice that of an average Canadian municipality relative to its total permanent resident population (Ibid.). The total immigrant population accounts for about 11%, or 10,320 people, in the municipality of which about 79% arrived after 1991. In addition, of the immigrant population

that arrived after 1991, 80% arrived between 2001 and 2011. As such, the period between 2001 and 2011 saw the arrival of 63.1% (or 6,520 people) of the total immigrant population in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (Statistics Canada, 2013). According to Statistics Canada's (2013) *National Household Survey*, the top three source regions for immigrants since 2006 in the municipality are Asia (52.3%), Africa (23.6%), and South America (13.5%), and the top five source countries are India (19% or 690 people), Philippines (15.2% or 555 people), Pakistan (9.1% or 330 people), Venezuela (7.6% or 275 people), and South Africa (5.5% or 200 people) (See Appendix F). In terms of ethnic identity, South Asian, Asian Pacific, and African are the three largest ethnic groups within the municipality respectively accounting for 5.9%, 3.3%, and 2.7% of the municipality's total population (RMWB, 2013: 56).

When discussing ethnic groups within the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, it is imperative to note that Aboriginal peoples constitute the second largest ethnic group at 6.8% of the total population (Ibid.: 54). There are five First Nations communities within the municipality, which include: Mikisew Cree First Nation, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Fort McKay First Nation, Fort McMurray No. 468 First Nation and Chipewyan Prairie Dene First Nation. In addition, the municipality lies within the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) Regions I and V and the Métis peoples within the municipality are represented by six Métis Locals: Locals 125 (Fort Chipewyan), 63 (Fort McKay), 1935 (Fort McMurray), 2020 (Fort McMurray), 780 (Anzac), and 193 (Conklin) (RAMP, 2014).

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has a high workforce participation rate at 82.7% (RMWB, 2012: 84), which is higher than Alberta's (73.1%) and Canada's (66%) workforce participation rate (Statistics Canada, 2013a). This is largely due to the fact that the municipality has a significantly younger population compared to the age distribution of the

population across Alberta and Canada. Specifically, it has a higher proportion of people aged 15-44 comprising 56.2% of the total population, with an average age of 32 years compared to 37 years of age in Alberta (PwC, 2013: 7) and 41 years of age in the rest of the country (Statistics Canada, 2013b). In addition, the municipality has a highly skilled or educated population with almost 66.5% of people between 25 and 64 years having attained a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree and 31% having attained a bachelor's degree or higher. The recent ethnic visible minority immigrant population in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo is reflective of the municipality's demographic, workforce participation, and education attainment statistics. The municipality is also comparatively affluent with an average household income of \$187,000, which is 118% higher than the national average (PwC, 2013: 9), with about 66% of households having an income over \$100,000 (RMWB, 2011: 6). However, it is important to note that the cost of living is much higher in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo than other regions in province and country.

The most significant reason for the municipality's rapid population growth, high workforce participation rate, and high average household income is due to the fact that it is located within the Athabasca oil sands. The Athabasca oil sands underlie approximately 140,000 square kilometres of Alberta making it the third largest petroleum reserve in the world behind Saudi Arabia and Venezuela (Alberta Energy, 2014). As such, not only does the Athabasca oil sands dominate the local economy of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, it also has increasingly important implications on the economies of Alberta, the other provinces, and the nation (Conference Board of Canada, 2012). The oil sands industry currently produces \$84 billion in economic activity with an additional \$2.1 trillion expected over the next twenty-five years (CAPP, 2013: 21). Furthermore, the oil sands are expected to create 905,000 new jobs

across Canada by 2035 with Alberta and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo being the greatest benefactors of this economic activity (CERI, 2011). The Alberta government estimates that there will be 114,000 more jobs than people in the next 10 years (Catteneo, 2012), and according to the Petroleum Human Resources Council of Canada (2013), an additional 15,000 workers are required just to replace retiring employees or those moving to other sectors. As such, it is expected that interprovincial and international migrants will play a key role in filling these jobs with a significant proportion of these migrants settling in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB, 2010; CERI, 2011; Conference Board of Canada, 2012; Petroleum Human Resources Council of Canada, 2013).

The Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo as Ethnoburbs

Based on Li's (1998) definition, the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo can be considered ethnoburbs, as both municipalities are multiethnic communities with a high concentration of ethnic visible minority immigrants that have directly settled in the municipalities. In addition, there is a significant concentration of immigrants from one source region in the two municipalities: Asia (Statistics Canada 2012; Statistics Canada 2013). Furthermore, the recent immigrant populations in both municipalities are resource-rich, highly skilled and educated (York Region, 2011: 10; Lo et al., 2010: 4; RMWB, 2011) and are engaged in the national and transnational circulation of commodities and capital (Houle and Schellenberg, 2008). This makes immigrants in both municipalities active participants within an "integrated economy" (Li and Dymski, 2007: 36). Another important aspect of the current ethnic visible minority immigrant populations in the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo is that they are choosing to settle in these areas, rather than being forced to do so because of social and economic marginalization. By historically having a population that was largely Canadian or

European, the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo have seen a dramatic shift in their social composition with ethnic visible minority immigrants playing an important role in the overall growth in total population over the past two decades. This change in social composition has been witnessed with marked intensity in the last ten years, and is expected to continue well into the next twenty years for both municipalities (PwC, 2013: 5; Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2013: 11). As ethnic visible minority immigrants continue to directly settle within the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo, the municipalities will continue to benefit socially and economically from the diversity. However, there will also be challenges that will continue to confront them. One of these challenges will be the way bureaucrats and politicians adequately and appropriately engage their diverse populations within the planning process.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The objective of the interviews was to examine the approaches to public engagement and consultation that are occurring within the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo as it pertains to the development and implementation of sustainability planning policy, and whether these approaches are culturally adequate and appropriate for their respective diverse populations. In this regard, the interviews provided a platform for informants to discuss their perceptions and views regarding how the recent ethnic visible minority immigrant communities have been engaged and consulted during the development and implementation of their respective municipality's ICSP, the *York Region Sustainability Strategy: Towards a Sustainable Region* and the *Envision Wood Buffalo Plan*. As such, the discussions that emerged as a result of the interviews pointed to five topics that are pertinent to this study in regards to the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo: 1) the changing social composition; 2) the importance of sustainable development; 3) the actual public engagement and consultation approaches used by both municipalities in the development and implementation of their respective ICSPs; 4) how the ethnic visible minority immigrant communities in the two municipalities perceive they were engaged and consulted in the development and implementation of their respective municipality's ICSP; and 5) what approaches and methods the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo should adopt when engaging and consulting with their respective ethnic visible minority immigrant population.

Social Change

“We are a different community than we were ten years ago or even twenty years ago; the change is really palpable” (Municipal Official A, York Region, 2014). The notion that the

Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo are “different” communities than they were twenty years ago was unanimously highlighted by all informants. In particular, all informants stated that their respective municipalities have seen a significant change in the social composition, especially through ethnic visible minority immigrants, with terms such as “multicultural”, “cultural mosaic”, and “diverse” used to describe the current populations of the two municipalities. Furthermore, five out of the six community leader informants stated that their respective communities have witnessed “rapid growth” within the past two decades. This observation was supported by municipal official informants in the Regional Municipality of York and Wood Buffalo. As one municipal official in the Regional Municipality of York mentioned:

“Our region has witnessed unprecedented growth, and certainly our region’s natural population growth could not have possibly accounted for the type of growth we have seen. International migration is the single largest contributing factor for our population growth. [...] In particular, the region has witnessed the rapid growth of the East Asian and South Asian communities” (Municipal Official D, York Region, 2014).

And, in the case of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo a municipal official informant noted:

“Since 2000, the Asian communities, like the Chinese and Indian communities, have grown at one of the fastest rates in Wood Buffalo. [...] They have become important groups within the region because of their current size, and because they are expected to continue to grow” (Municipal Official B, RMWB, 2014).

In this regard, the growth of the ethnic visible minority immigrant population in both municipalities is not only highlighted in official statistics and reports, but it is something that is felt and observed.

With the growth of the ethnic visible minority immigrant population in both municipalities, there has also been an increase in the cultural activities and events that these immigrant

communities are organizing. These cultural activities and events act as a mechanism for the minority communities to make “the rest of population aware that [they] exist and that [they] also live in the community; that [they] are also citizens” (Community Leader C, RMWB, 2014). This concept of citizenship and sense of “existing” within the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo was noted by all community leader informants as being important for their respective community groups to feel a sense of belonging and to feel that they can fully participate in the social and political realms of their host society. As Wong (1997) delineates, cultural events and activities which are organized and presented by ethnic minority communities within host societies are imperative to bring forth a consciousness of aspects of multiculturalism that lead to the perception that ethnic minority communities are fully integrated with the rest of the population. As a municipal official asserted:

“There are several events, festivals, and multicultural celebrations that have emerged in the municipality that didn’t previously exist and that have enriched the social and cultural fabric of our community. A marvelous aspect of these events is that they are open to all residents and not just to those individuals from the communities organizing them; this goes to show how inclusive and multicultural our community is” (Municipal Official C, RMWB, 2014).

In addition to the cultural events and activities, both municipalities have also seen an increase in ethnic commercial activity¹² to meet the “market niches” that have emerged due to the changing patterns of supply and demand in the two municipalities (Jones, Barrett and McEvoy, 2000).

The ethnic commercial activities that exist in the Regional Municipality of York provide much more than low-order goods and primary services, such as restaurants and grocery stores; they have expanded to include high-order services requiring higher skills and education, such as banking, medical, and legal services. While there is an established market for low-order good and primary services in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, all of the community leader informants noted that a market is emerging for high-order services as the ethnic visible minority

population increases. In both municipalities, although the five largest mainstream Canadian banks are represented: Royal Bank of Canada, Toronto Dominion Bank, Scotiabank, CIBC and BMO, there are also foreign banking institutions represented. For example, in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo there are several ethnic specific and foreign banking institutions that provide remittance and other services to the ethnic visible minority immigrant population such as Manila Express Cargo and Remittance Services and Ria Money Transfer. In the Regional Municipality of York Region, there are several ethnic specific and foreign banking institutions, most notably the Canadian head offices of two foreign Chinese banks: The Bank of China (Canada) and The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (Canada). These ethnic commercial activities were noted as being crucial to the immigrant communities because they create links between the source countries of the immigrants and Canada in both municipalities. This is highlighted by the following assertion made by an informant:

“The services available for our community in the region are important for us to feel like this is now our home. We can eat our food and buy things that we would if we were back home. [...] It is also important that we can use the same banks that we would use back home. This helps when we are sending money back to our loved ones, because they charge less than other banks charge for wiring money. The Canadian banks charge too much for this service” (Community Leader A, York Region, 2014).

As Li and Dymski (2007:37) highlight, the exchange and availability of transnational capital differentiates the ethnoburb from traditional ethnic enclaves, as immigrants and commercial activity in ethnoburbs are part of an “integrated economy” which integrates the ethnic commercial activity “with the mainstream economy, but with a distinct ethnic imprint.” This allows for the ethnic economy to become integrated into both the national and international economic systems. The “integrated ethnic economy” also follows two trends that are part of the larger political economy: 1) the shift toward knowledge economy sectors; and 2) the demand for

highly-skilled and well-paid professionals (Ibid.). Most importantly, the financial services available produce an “integrated ethnic economy” which allows for a transnational character to develop within the two municipalities, which promotes the flow of capital between host country and country of origin in terms of remittance, loans, and savings (Ibid.: 39-47).

The development of the diversity of co-ethnic goods and services that are provided to the ethnic visible minority immigrant populations in the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo have allowed the ethnic visible minority populations to “mov[e] toward[s] higher levels of institutional completeness” (Wang, 1999: 28). In addition, they have provided alternative goods and services to the general population which has been highlighted by the majority of informants in both municipalities, and which is articulated by the following:

“You can hear on our streets through the different languages spoken, you can see it in the diversity of our residents, and ethnic stores and restaurants that now exist that have enriched our community. All of our residents can now enjoy food and goods from all corners of the world at any of the fine ethnic establishments in our region.” (Municipal Official E, York Region, 2014).

As such, the changing social composition in both municipalities has not only transformed the social aspects of the communities, they have also contributed to the transformation of the goods and services available where there is a mainstream and ethnic business nexus through the globalization of capital, commodities, and flow of humans (Li et al., 2002: 792). As Li (2006:84) argues, it is the co-growth of the ethnic population and businesses with the mainstream host population and businesses, along with the interaction between the ethnic population and the host population that “is important in the formation and manifestation of the ethnoburb”. This is characteristic of the social change occurring in the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo.

Developing and Growing Sustainably

As has been previously noted, both Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo are surrounded by ecologically sensitive lands that are protected to varying degrees. These lands have presented the two municipalities with a similar dilemma of how to manage economic and population growth while preserving the integrity of the ecologically sensitive areas that surround them. In this regard, urban and suburban areas have been conceptualized and defined as separate spaces, as “inside and outside, centrality and periphery, of town and country”, where nature is a site of production and urban and suburban areas are sites of consumption (Keil and Graham, 1998: 103). This conceptualization has been reproduced though time even though human settlements have always been built within nature, as they are created by appropriating the natural environment to create urban and suburban environments where human populations continue to rely on nature through the practices of accumulation, consumption and reproduction. The municipal official informants in the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo articulated that their communities are dependent on the natural environment that surround them for agricultural and other natural resource dependent activities. This is particularly the case in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo where the natural resources extractive industry is a major source of economic activity and population growth. This was noted by the following:

“The [Athabasca] oil sands are crucial to our local economy and are a significant source of tax revenue to the municipality; with 97% of Wood Buffalo’s tax revenues coming from the oil sands. Without the oil sands the community would not have the type of economic and population growth and development that is currently occurring” (Municipal Official F, RMWB, 2014).

In the Regional Municipality of York, the ecologically sensitive and protected lands contribute more than \$1.5 billion dollars to the region’s economy through the ecological services and

agricultural and farming activities that take place within them (Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation, 2012: 94-97). As highlighted by an informant:

“The protected lands in York Region like the Ontario Greenbelt and the Oak Ridges Moraine, are important for the ecosystem services that they provide and for the economic benefit to the region’s local economy. Over 26,000 full-time jobs are created alone because of the greenbelt that surrounds York Region and is an important source of food for our community” (Municipal Official C, York Region, 2014).

In this regard, the ecologically sensitive and protected areas that surround both municipalities are important to the local economies through the natural capital¹³ that they provide. As such, the surrounding natural environment is regarded as an intrinsic part of the growth and development for the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo whereby a “clear separation of urbanity and nature” does not exist, but rather they have a symbiotic relationship (Keil and Graham, 1998: 103-107). In other words, there has been a reordering and rationalizing of capitalistic urbanization where nature and the urban are connected through urban sustainability and ecological planning discourses (Kipfer, Hartmann and Marino, 1996: 5).

As the populations and economies of the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo grow and develop, they will have direct and indirect impacts on the ecologically sensitive areas and protected lands that surround them. However, to mitigate these impacts in order to lessen the current and future environmental burden, both municipalities have undertaken steps to ensure that economic and population growth occur sustainably. Both municipalities have a concerted aim of preserving the integrity of the ecologically sensitive areas and protected lands that surround them, along with the benefits that are provided by the natural assets. As such, the ecologically sensitive areas and protected lands have become a fundamental stakeholder in institutional and legislative reforms regarding urban-regional development in both

municipalities. This was stated by the majority of municipal officials in both municipalities, and effectively articulated by an informant in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo:

“Ensuring that we protect the flora and fauna that we are blessed to be nestled amongst is an import aspect in the planning process. [...] We are not only mandated by the provincial government to manage how our economic activities and population growth impact the natural environment, our residents also expect the same. For this reason, developing in a sustainable manner is a guiding principle for any planning activity. [...] When we develop we ask “how will this project affect the natural environment around us?” (Municipal Official E, RMWB, 2014).

As all municipal official informants stated, one of the various ways this has manifested within the planning process of the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo is through policies such as the ICSPs. In addition, nine of the twelve municipal official informants stated that the biggest contributing factor for their respective municipalities in trying to manage the population and economic growth of their communities is the fact that the majority of the lands that are considered ecologically sensitive or protected are not in their control. Instead, their respective provincial governments have control of a significant proportion of the lands that surround their municipalities. In the case of the Regional Municipality of York:

“The Ontario government has created a ‘no-development zone’ when they established the legislation for the Ontario Greenbelt; however, at the same time they have also legislated intensified economic and population growth for the region that lays within the Greenbelt through the Places to Growth Act. So, as a region we not only have our own goals and objective for economic and population growth and ensuring that we are conscious of the environment that is around us, we have the added responsibility of conforming to the province’s objective for growth and environmental conservation” (Municipal Official B, York Region, 2014).

Similarly, in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo “the Alberta government has control and ownership of the land that surrounds the municipality. This impacts the rate at which the community can develop and provide the necessities that people expect to have such as housing supply, community services and other infrastructure” (Municipal Official D, RMWB, 2014). As

such, it was commented by three municipal official informants at the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo that the provincial government's ownership of the lands that surround the municipality have created an unaffordable real estate market, as land prices are reflective of the scarce availability of developable land in the municipality. In this regard, both the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo are faced with the challenge of balancing their respective goals of economic and population growth while working within the legislative provisions of their respective provincial governments. However, as the majority of the municipal officials stated their political and policy commitments to ensuring that economic and population growth occur in a manner where there is the smallest possible "ecological footprint".

A well-established consequence of urbanization and suburbanization is the conversion of land to accommodate the built environment, which leads to the destruction of natural ecosystems (Gandy, 2004; Heynen, Kaika and Swyngedouw, 2006). In this regard, there is a particular focus on applying the concept of metabolism to the urban and suburban environment, especially in regards to how these environments should espouse to the cyclical metabolism of the natural environment (Girardet, 2008). As such, the concept of "ecological footprint" as discussed by the municipal official informants in both municipalities highlights how the concept of sustainable development requires an understanding of the demands placed by urban and suburban areas on a wider geographical area and ecological resource base, whereby both material and energy flow between nature and human settlement (Gandy, 2004; Kenndy, 2010). As expressed by an informant in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo:

"[The] ecological footprint includes the use of the productive land and water ecosystems required to produce the goods and services, and then consumed by the region's residents. And then we have to take into account the carbon dioxide emissions associated with the manufacturing, transporting, distribution and disposal of those good and how we can ensure that they are done in a way that is ecologically and socially responsible. [...] For our municipality to be sustainable

we need to limit our environmental impact, both individually and as a community as a whole, and ensure we have the smallest possible ecological footprint” (Municipal Official E, RMWB, 2014).

As such, an aspect of the discourse that surrounds sustainable development at the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo involves the “sum total of the technical and socioeconomic processes that occur [...], resulting in growth, production of energy and the elimination of waste” (Kennedy, Cuddihy and Yan, 2007: 44). In addition, two other aspects of the sustainable development discourse occurring in both municipalities involve the concepts of resilience and place competitiveness. As noted by the following statement: “being sustainable will ensure that our municipality is resilient to the external factors that are faced by all communities in Canada and across the world, like climate change and its impacts on humans” (Municipal Official A, RMWB, 2014). In this regard, resilience within the sustainable development discourse in both municipalities is understood in terms of socio-ecological systems and the “dynamic interactions between socio-economic and biophysical processes operate over multiple scales” (Buxton, 2011: 2). Furthermore, being sustainable and resilient was noted by ten of the twelve municipal official informants as being important for their respective municipality’s competitiveness within a global economy. As one informant commented:

“As a municipality we are not only competing with other municipalities within the Greater Toronto Area, or Ontario, or even nationally; but we are competing with a global playing field with municipalities from all corners of the world. For this reason, the approach to develop in a sustainable manner is more than good for the environment, it makes good economic sense. [...] People and businesses are attracted to places where they know that social, environmental, and economic goals are equally important, because there is a sense that these places are resilient in a sometimes uncertain world. Where negative external factors are able to be mitigated; where it will be business as usual even if in other places it isn’t the case” (Municipal Official C, York Region, 2014).

For this reason, sustainable development is not only critical for ensuring the preservation and conservation of the ecologically sensitive areas and protected lands that surround the

Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo, but it also helps to manage the economic and population growth in a way that ensures their resilience and global competitiveness. This supports Brenner's articulation that:

“ [O]bjectives such as ‘sustainability’ actually entail the elaboration of a strategy of urban structural competitiveness in which *all* aspects of city space—from its social infrastructures and its political culture to its ecological foundations—are to be transformed into local economic assets and ‘endogenous growth potentials’ for attracting further capital investment” (2000:5, emphasis in original).

As has been previously stated, both municipalities face a similar dilemma of having their respective provincial governments control and own the majority of the ecologically sensitive and protected lands that surround them, which confronts both the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo with the challenge of balancing their respective goals of economic and population growth while working within the legislative provisions of their respective provincial governments.

Municipal Approaches and Methods for Engagement and Consultation

A crucial aspect of developing and implementing ICSPs is engaging and consulting various stakeholders, including citizens, throughout the process (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2014). For this reason, it is imperative that municipalities have a collaborative mindset and use various participatory techniques when developing and implementing ICSPs (Planning for Sustainable Canadian Communities Roundtable, 2004: 5). As with any other planning policy or activities, when there is collaboration and inclusion of citizens and other stakeholders in the decision-making process, it helps promote and instill a sense of shared responsibility and greater public consensus by having all stakeholders participate in the creation of future goals of their community (Bohunovsky, Jager and Omann, 2010). All of the municipal

official informants from the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo noted that their municipalities engaged and consulted the various stakeholders, including citizens, in their communities when developing and implementing their respective ICSPs, the *York Region Sustainability Strategy: Towards a Sustainable Region* and the *Envision Wood Buffalo Plan*, through a variety of methods, including: public meetings, round tables, focus groups, information sessions, working groups, and surveys. This was expressed by an informant in the Regional Municipality of York when stating that:

“We used a variety of methods to engage the community when developing the [York] Sustainability Strategy, which allowed citizens and other stakeholders to actively participate in creating and implementing the document. [...] Consultation allows us to work collaboratively with members of our community to gain consensus for the objectives we aim to achieve” (Municipal Official F, York Region, 2014).

By engaging the public in the consultation process during the development and implementation of ICSPs, the two municipalities provided a platform for their citizens to participate in a collaborative and multi-stakeholder process where the municipal government, the community, and other interested parties worked as a whole to identify beneficial goals and actions towards sustainability (Connelly, Markey, and Roseland, 2009). In addition, “engagement is critical in gaining community support for planning policies and developments that municipal governments propose [...] although consultation is a legal requirement it is also a way for governments to gage public opinion in safe and contained manner” (Municipal Official C, RMWB, 2014). As such, public engagement and consultation encourages support for planning policy of municipalities because the objectives are agreed upon by all affected parties in an open process (Gibson, 2006).

As one of the most important stakeholders in the planning process, citizens present a variety of challenges for municipal officials—particularly bureaucrats—in the engagement and

consultation process. There were five key challenges identified by the majority of municipal officials in the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo when trying to engage and consult with citizens in the development and implementation of their respective ICSPs. The first identified challenge was that citizens can perceive that there is a “relocation of power” away from their community (Ling, Hanna and Dale, 2009: 232), when working with other communities to achieve regional objectives. This is especially the case when trying to balance the distinct forms of environmental concern among the urban and rural communities within the two regional municipalities. As Huddart-Kennedy et al. delineate, environmental concern “consists of behavioural and cognitive dimensions” where the behavioural dimension includes actions and activities that promote conservation of the environment and the cognitive dimension includes “values, beliefs, and environmental worldviews” (2009: 312- 313). In this regard, rural communities tend to focus on more of the behavioral dimensions through stewardship activities, which reflect their dependence on the land on which they live through the economic activities that exist in rural communities such as farming. Likewise, urban communities tend to focus on the cognitive aspects of environmental concern such as environmental and political activism, which reflect the availability of services and facilities to urban residents such as greater access to political organizations and institutions (Ibid.). This urban-rural divide was noted in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo when an informant stated:

“Although our citizens in the rural communities of our region incorporate sustainable activities in their daily lives, we tended to not see them out as much at the public consultation process when we developed the [ICSP]. However, we had greater levels of participation from citizens from Fort McMurray [the Urban Service Area ...] it is often the case that those from Fort McMurray are more active in the public consultation process, generally speaking” (Municipal Official F, RMWB, 2014).

Similarly, the citizens that live in the urban communities of the Regional Municipality of York tend to manifest their environmental concern differently than those in the rural communities, as suggested by the following:

“While the region’s citizens in Richmond Hill, Vaughan, and Markham are usually more vocal and political when it comes to things that cause environmental degradation like climate change, pollution, and managing economic growth in a manner that limits environmental impact. On the other hand, the citizens in the rural municipalities tend to be more concerned about their ability to produce goods and services from the environment, which could be related to the fact much of the rural communities exist within prime agricultural lands. [...] Even though the threat to environmental degradation can be more visible at times in our rural communities, it is our urban communities that seem to be more engaged and vocal about the threat” (Municipal Official E, York Region, 2014).

In this regard, it was noted by municipal official informants in both municipalities that often citizens in the rural communities tend to perceive that their respective regional municipality only “listen to the urban communit[ies], because they have more citizens to sway the vote” (Municipal Official B, RMWB, 2014), or that “because they are not engaged as much in the formal consultation processes, the regional municipality doesn’t pay attention to their concerns or needs” (Municipal Official A, York Region, 2014). Therefore, there is also a perception that “power to inform policy is something that is only available to those citizens in the urban parts of the municipality” (Municipality Official D, York Region, 2014). It is here that the second key challenge was identified: it is difficult to include all stakeholders equally. As has been highlighted, even when dealing with one stakeholder group, there are inherent conflicts that arise; however, these conflicts can be exacerbated when dealing with multi-stakeholders (Beierle and Konisky, 2000). Particularly with environmental and sustainable development policy, it is often difficult to identify and include all stakeholders who are affected by or will affect the environment (Bohunovsky, Jager and Omann, 2010). As such, although “having all stakeholders present during the consultation process is critical in any planning exercise, sometimes some

stakeholders are not easily identifiable, which leads to them being excluded in the process”

(Municipal Official D, RMWB, 2014). Furthermore, when stakeholder groups are identified and engaged in the consultation process, there can be internal conflict that arise because often stakeholder groups are heterogeneous. As Winn (2001:136) asserts:

“Stakeholders [...] are defined explicitly as being influenced by or influencing an organization and implicitly around the shared interest(s) vis-à-vis the organization. And although broadly inclusive, this definition is rather coarse and theoretically problematic. [Stakeholders] are far from being a monolithic, homogeneous group, differing widely in terms of interests, involvement/sophistication, and influence capacity.”

In this respect, viewing citizens as a single stakeholder group imagines the citizens of the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo as homogeneous, when in fact they are not. However, “there is a limited amount of resources available to ensure that all stakeholders are engaged in the development and implementation of planning policy” (Municipal Official D, York Region, 2014). Therefore, viewing citizens as a single homogeneous stakeholder is often the best approach “available to ensure that everyone that wants to be involved gets an opportunity to do so” (Ibid.). The availability of resources is a critical element when trying to include all stakeholders equally, both in terms of time and money, as highlighted by an informant in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo:

“During the development of the Envision Wood Buffalo, we tried to ensure that everyone who we had identified as a stakeholder had the opportunity to provide their input. [...] However, as with other planning activities there was limited resources available. [...] The consultation process is expensive and it takes up a lot of time for everyone involved” (Municipal Official A, RMWB, 2014).

Even if all stakeholders are identified and engaged in the consultation process to develop and implement their respective municipality’s ICSP, a third key challenge, as noted by the municipal official informants, emerges.

During the consultation process with stakeholders, including citizens, one of the challenges to participation that was identified by eight of the twelve municipal official informant was the temporal commitment that is required. As commented by an informant in the Regional Municipality of York:

“You can identify them, and you can encourage them to participate, but you cannot force them to come out and be part of the process. It is often the case that we only have a hand full of residents show up during the public engagement events. But then you can’t really blame them! Between going to work and family commitments and then just life in general, people find it hard to find time for themselves let alone to come out and help develop policy” (Municipal Official B, York Region, 2014).

When citizens participate in public consultation activities organized by their governments, they are rarely compensated financially or otherwise. This holds true for the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo. Therefore, the rate of participation in both municipalities is a direct result of a variety of factors including the willingness of citizens wanting to be part of the consultation process. As it was aptly noted, citizen willingness to participate in the consultation process is much like their willingness to cast a vote during elections:

“Just like voting, public consultation is part of the democratic system. It is there for all to participate. And just like with voting you cannot force people to vote, you cannot force people to participate. You can only provide the opportunity. That’s part of democracy!” (Municipal Official F, RMWB, 2014).

Furthermore, in regards to the issue of time, it is important to highlight that five of the six community leader informants also mentioned that the time commitment was an issue for their respective community members to fully participate in the consultation process of planning policies or development projects in general. In addition, they stated that the majority of public consultation activities, including those for the ICSP for the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo, were scheduled at times that were not appropriate for citizens, such that “for many people who work and have families, it is impossible to attend public consultation meetings

that are usually at 6pm or 7pm on a weekday” (Community Leader C, York Region, 2014). A community leader informant offered a remedy for this situation, stating “there needs to be a variety in the times that there are opportunities for public consultation” (Community Leader A, RMWB, 2014). However, for those citizens that do participate, the fourth challenge, as mentioned by the municipal official informants, is trying to balance the goals and objectives of all citizens and other stakeholders into the ICSP, while still maintaining the goals and objectives of the municipality. In this regard, as Appelstrand (2002: 281) describes, “participation is about finding consensus in diversity and reflects a normative shift towards multiple-use values that recognise that [environmental] management should blend multiple management objectives into a coherent set of practices.” When trying to build consensus there is always varying levels of compromise that are involved by those engaged in planning or policy tasks, whereby goals and objectives of a variety of public, private, and government stakeholders are able to be incorporated in mutually agreed upon goals and objectives. Consensus building is important to provide direction for complex, uncertain, or evolving situations, as it can help move “a community toward higher levels of social and environmental performance” because all stakeholders learn “how to work together better” and develop goals and objectives that are viable for all that are involved (Innes and Booher, 1999: 413). This is supported by the following comment made by a municipal official informant in the Regional Municipality of York:

“It was important to develop consensus on the goals and objectives that were developed by citizens with the goals and objectives of the municipality [...] When developing and implementing the [ICSP], the municipality was working within a specific framework of what the outcome of our goals and objective needed to be, but at the same time we needed to be respectful of the goals and objectives that the citizens developed. [...] In sorts, it can be viewed as a balancing act, where we need to ensure that everyone that participated feels as though their input was important, while still meeting the needs and requirements that the municipality has” (Municipal Official D, York Region, 2014).

In this respect, consensus building was an important aspect of balancing the various goals and objectives that were articulated by citizens during the consultation process in developing and implementing their respective municipality's ICSP. By building consensus, it had three positive outcomes in both municipalities: 1) "it helped foster a sense of agreement by everyone involved, even if their views were not included" (Municipal Official A, RMWB, 2014); 2) "it provided more coherent and clearer goals and objectives by grouping ideas that are essentially the same into a singular idea" (Municipal Official F, York Region, 2014); and 3) "ensured that individuals did not feel as though their participation was meaningless, because even if their ideas were not used they participated in forming new ideas through compromise" (Municipal Official A, York Region, 2014). Therefore, while trying to balance the goals and objectives developed by a variety of stakeholders with municipal goals and objectives can be challenging, through consensus building all stakeholders involved are capable of "gaining new shared understanding, [...] building trust, and creating increasingly sophisticated solutions. In short, people can trade self-defeating patterns of conflict for ones that empower them to engage in adaptive and rewarding actions" (Innes and Booher, 1999: 422). However, to have citizens involved in consensus building, there needs to be an interested public to engage with and consult. Here, the fifth and perhaps the most important challenge that was identified emerges: the lack of public participation in developing and implementing ICSPs due to apathy, which is due to the nature of ICSPs being long-term plans (Durley, 2007; Webler and Tuler, 2001). This notion is aptly expressed by an informant:

"It is hard to convince citizens to participate in an exercise where their efforts are not going to manifest in the near future. [ICSPs] are long-term plans and for many their participation may seem an ineffective use of their time or energy. [...] We live in an era where people expect instant results and this is just not possible in any planning exercise and certainly not possible with integrated community sustainability planning policy" (Municipal Official D, RMWB, 2014).

The fact that ICSPs have an emphasis on long-term planning, thinking, and goals, can deter citizens from engaging in the consultation process largely because they may feel their involvement is “not significant in the grand scheme of things, due to the fact that unlike some other planning activities like precinct plans where their participation has outcomes that are visible within a relatively shorter time period” (Municipal Official C, York Region, 2014). Furthermore, “How do you convince the public that their participation in a planning policy that has a 50-100 year time frame will have direct impact in their lives today? Because often citizens only get involved in the planning process if there is something that affects their lives directly now or in the near future” (Municipal Official B, York Region, 2014). In this respect, the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo faced a variety of challenges when trying to engage their citizens in the development and implementation of their respective ICSPs, the *York Region Sustainability Strategy: Towards a Sustainable Region* and the *Envision Wood Buffalo Plan*, including their ethnic visible minority immigrant populations. However, even though it was noted by the majority of the municipal official informants from both municipalities that it was important to engage with their respective ethnic visible minority populations in public consultation activities, it was also suggested that there are not any specific approaches or strategies used to ensure this happens. This was also the case when developing and implementing their respective ICSPs.

There was a notable divide between how the politicians and how the bureaucrats viewed the way in which their respective municipalities had engaged their ethnic visible minority immigrant populations in the development and implementation of their respective ICSPs. While the majority of politicians stated that their respective municipalities had specific approaches that engaged their ethnic visible minority immigrant populations in the development and

implementation of their ICSPs, the majority of bureaucrat informants noted that the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo did not have specific approaches:

“In respect to public consultation processes [York Region does] not have any specific approaches developed to engage with minority groups. We utilize traditional and established approaches in all of our public consultation and engagement processes, including when developing and implementing the [ICSP].” (Municipal Official E, York Region, 2014).

And,

“As for specific approaches for our ethnic communities, the municipality doesn’t have such strategies or approaches when we engage citizens. [...] And when developed [the ICSP] with the public, we used traditional approaches to engagement. [...] Although, with the growing immigrant population, it is something that I think we need to really look into” (Municipal Official F, RMWB, 2014).

Thus, by using traditional methods and approaches to public consultation and engagement it can be surmised that neither municipality engaged its respective ethnic visible minority immigrant populations in a manner that was culturally appropriate or adequate. As Burayidi (2000:1) states, “it is puzzling that what constitutes much of the tangible outcomes of plans, [...], reflects less of a variation of the diverse cultures in the country.” This implies that there is a “lack of representation, or a muzzling of the voices of nondominant socio-cultural groups,” whereby municipal officials have “failed to articulate their culture and needs” (Ibid.). In addition, as Innes and Booher (2004:1) state:

“The traditional methods of public participation in government decision-making simply do not work. They do not achieve genuine participation in planning or decisions; they do not provide significant information to public officials that makes a difference to their actions; they do not satisfy members of the public that they are being heard; they do not improve the decisions that agencies and public officials make; and they do not represent a broad spectrum of the public.”

By using traditional methods and approaches, there has been a lack of attention paid to how “different groups insist on being treated differently” (Burayidi, 2000: 2). In this respect, it can be

suggested that the public engagement and consultation practises of the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo tend to be overwhelmingly influenced by “white” middle-class preferences and ideals (Agyeman, 1990; Booth, 1996; Wright, 1998; Beebeejaun, 2004; Sheedy et al., 2008: 10; Shipley and Utz, 2011; Collins, 2013). Therefore, it can be further stated that there has not been culturally appropriate and adequate response by the two municipalities to the change in social composition that has occurred in terms of public engagement and consultation in the development and implementation process of their ICSPs.

Perceived Engagement and Consultation

Incorporating citizens in the decision-making process can lead to policies and decisions that are “more realistically grounded in citizen preferences,” which might make citizens “more sympathetic evaluators of the tough decisions that government administrators have to make,” and “create a less divisive, combative populace to govern and regulate” (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004: 55). While engaging citizens in planning processes and other public affairs is an important aspect of the stakeholder consultation process of governments, often public participation initiatives are not well-supported by citizens. This is highlighted by a lack of interest, or apathy, and low turnout (O’Toole et al., 2003; Lowndes, Pratchett and Stoker, 2004; Pilet et al., 2007). In this regard, the dominant view of the community leader informants was while that the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo have public consultation and engagement opportunities that members of their respective ethnic communities only tend to participate on issues that are of “concern” or “that matter” to them. A community leader informant in the Regional Municipality of York illustrated this notion:

“Members in our community have a tendency to only become engaged reactively rather than becoming engaged proactively. Like the general population, they tend

to react to decisions and issues that affect them personally and this is when they decide to engage in the public consultation process” (Community Leader B, York Region, 2014).

And, similarly in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, an informant noted:

“NIMBYISM is probably the biggest reason why citizens get involved in public consultation activities in the region. The same holds true for people in my [ethnic] community. They usually only get involved when something concerns them directly, or concerns our [ethnic] community collectively” (Community Leader B, RMWB, 2014).

Even on issues of “concern” or “that matter” to members of ethnic communities collectively or individually within the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo, it was stated by half of the community leader informants that there is a tendency of members of their respective communities to have varying levels of apathy or indifference to the public engagement and consultation process. This is highlighted by the following assertion: “even when there are opportunities to be engaged, it is hard to get people to participate. I don’t think this is something that affects minorities more than the rest of the population; it’s something that affects everyone in the municipality” (Community Leader C, RMWB, 2014).

Four of the six community leader informants also noted that when there are opportunities for public consultation, they are usually advertised in local municipal newspapers or can be found online through the internet, an approach that has the possibility of limiting the engagement of individuals from ethnic visible minority immigrant groups due to the variations in language and computer literacy skills within their respective communities. This was articulated by a community leader informant in the Regional Municipality of York:

“While we generally are a highly educated community, there are still individuals who lack adequate language and technology literacy skills. This is especially the case if they have recently settled in the region. [...] Many wouldn’t know to look in the local newspaper or on York Region’s website to see what is going on within the community” (Community Leader A, York Region, 2014).

Furthermore, it was noted by all community leader informants that they were not aware of any strategies employed by their respective municipality to specifically engage their communities or other ethnic communities in public consultation activities. However, the majority of the informants did state that there was an increase of “visits” by local politicians to cultural and religious celebrations during elections:

“During elections you will see them [politicians] come to our [place of worship] to ask our [ethnic] community for support. [...] You can also count on the yearly visits or letters during holidays and celebrations that our community observes, but often we have to ask for this to happen” (Community Leader A, RMWB, 2014).

It was noted that these “visits” are used to “encourage the community to vote and to participate in the democratic process” (Community Leader C, York Region, 2014). In addition, the community leader informants commented that other than the visits by politicians, there was little interaction with the members of their respective ethnic communities with municipal officials—politicians or bureaucrats—from the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo. In particular, it was stressed by five of the six community leader informants that there was hardly any interaction between members of their respective ethnic communities and bureaucrats. Furthermore, it was commented that since bureaucrats are important agents in the decision-making process, it would be of benefit to their respective ethnic communities to build stronger relationships with bureaucrats through both formal and informal interactions. This is highlighted by the following two comments:

“There is rarely any interaction with municipal staff other than if individuals make an effort to go to the municipal building and see someone. But then who do you go see? I do not know any municipal staff! Isn’t it weird that these people make important decisions for the municipality and yet they are like secret agents? [...] It seems only those who are privileged get to know them” (Community Leader B, RMWB, 2014).

And,

“Although it is nice to have politicians come to ‘meet and greet’ with people in the community, which in one sense is part of their job, it would be equally as nice to get to have the same opportunity to ‘meet and greet’ with those that work for the municipality. I can tell you who my Regional Councillor is, but if you ask me to tell you who the head of planning for York Region is, I have no clue! I am quite confident that this is the case with the majority of people living in the region” (Community Leader A, York Region, 2014).

Two of the most prevalent reasons for the lack of interaction between members of the ethnic visible minority immigrant communities and municipal officials, particularly in terms of public engagement and consultation, in the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo were: 1) “the lack of direct solicitation” from the two municipalities to include minority groups in the public engagement and consultation process; and 2) the “limited translation services” provided during engagement and consultation activities. This was asserted by a community leader informant in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo:

“It’s like we do not exist; like we are not important. When they need the votes you see them, but then when they get elected they disappear. [...] We are a fast growing community within the municipality, so I do not understand why we are not included in the decisions that are made in the region. [...] They should directly ask us to participate in consultation activities. It’s that simple, just ask! We do not need fancy ads in the newspapers or on the radio, just ask. Make us feel that what we have to say is important just like the rest of the residents!” (Community Leader B, RMWB, 2014).

And, in the case of the Regional Municipality of York, an informant commented:

“It’s interesting how the fact that York Region is a diverse municipality is used in speeches, in plans, and promotional materials, but they hardly seem to have opportunities for the different communities to participate in developing the future of the municipality. [...] They do not even have translation services at public meetings or translated materials. This makes it difficult for many people to participate whose first language is other than English” (Community Leader C, York Region, 2014).

In this sense, the majority of the community leader informants in both municipalities suggested that within their respective ethnic communities it is often felt that they are not engaged with or

consulted. This is succinctly stated by the following: “the perception of engagement is that there is no engagement or consultation with us” (Community Leader A, RMWB, 2014). Therefore, it was claimed that both municipalities have a “great deal of work to do to properly engage ethnic communities” (Community Leader B, York Region, 2014), and that “while there is a lot of talk about engaging with the diversity that exists, there is little action that is actually occurring or that is felt by minority groups” (Community Leader C, RMWB, 2014).

Specifically regarding the engagement process of the ICSPs for the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo, the *York Region Sustainability Strategy: Towards a Sustainable Region* and the *Envision Wood Buffalo Plan*, the majority of community leader informants responded with suggestions that their respective communities were not involved in the development or implementation of this planning policy. It was also repeatedly asserted that the engagement and consultation process in the development and implementation of the ICSPs of the two municipalities was “like other engagement opportunities”, where it is often perceived that minority groups are “excluded from participating.” Furthermore, it was claimed by the majority of community leader informants that “being sustainable” or “participating in sustainable activities” is imagined as something that “white people do” or something that “ethnic people are not interested in.” However, the community leaders asserted that “environmental concern is something that transcends race, religion or culture” (Community Leader A, York Region, 2014), and that “being sustainable is important for every human everywhere” (Community Leader B, RMWB, 2014). In addition, an informant explained:

“Just because individuals from my [ethnic] community do not join a protest or sign up as an activist with Greenpeace it doesn’t mean that we are not concerned with environmental issues” (Community Leader C, RMWB, 2014).

As Wright (1998) articulates, it is important to distinguish “concern” from “activism” because a common misunderstanding, especially by those in the environmental movement (and those developing and implementing environmental and sustainability policy), is that their non-representation in the movement means that people from ethnic minority groups are not interested or concerned about the issues pertaining to environmental degradation or sustainability. As such, the mainstream environmental movement employs a narrow definition of ‘the environment’; “one defined by white, middle class people,” and that “ethnic minority people are under-represented in the environmental movement as a whole,” whereby the current environmental movement “does not reflect issues of daily relevance to their lives” (Friends of the Earth, 1996: 6). The mainstream definition of environment pertains to the bio-physical aspects of the planet: the biosphere, atmosphere and hydrosphere, and tends to neglect complex social or cultural aspects that can also be considered when defining “the environment”. Hence, a more relevant definition would incorporate the bio-physical aspects as well as the complex social and cultural aspects, such as how different cultures and religions have a different understanding(s) and/or relationship(s) with the bio-physical aspects and how these are played out through social reproduction and individual daily routine by those of different ethnicities.

Furthermore, it was articulated by four of the six community leader informants that while their respective ethnic communities perceive that they were not involved in the development and implementation of municipal policies including the ICSPs, there is an interest within their respective communities to become more civically engaged. This is highlighted by the following assertion:

“There is a desire for people to participate in making their community a better place, but there needs to be proper response to engage with the diverse population that currently exists. The status quo in approaches to engage will no longer cut it” (Community Leader A, York Region, 2014).

It was broadly mentioned that the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo need to develop new strategies to engage with their respective ethnic visible minority immigrant populations and that “these strategies need to be developed with the ethnic groups and not for the ethnic groups” (Community Leader A, RMWB, 2014). In this respect, to ensure greater participation by ethnic visible minority immigrants in the development and implementation of municipal policies such as the ICSPs, municipal officials—particularly bureaucrats—need to develop culturally appropriate and adequate strategies with the ethnic visible minority communities. This will ensure greater participation in public consultation and engagement activities by ethnic visible minority immigrants in the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo. It will also provide more opportunities for interaction between citizens, politicians, and bureaucrats.

Suggested Approaches and Methods for Public Engagement and Consultation

Wilson states that the “demand for local participation needs to sit alongside a supply of appropriate participation methods” (1999: 249). With this in mind, the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo need to employ appropriate methods to engage and consult with their diverse populations in the development and implementation of policy. In this regard, the community leader informants suggested approaches and methods that the two municipalities should use to stimulate engagement. From the variety of approaches and methods that were mentioned, there were three that were most commonly stated by the informants.

The first most commonly mentioned approach was the need for municipal officials, both politicians and bureaucrats, to directly solicit ethnic visible minority immigrant groups to participate in public consultation activities, which is highlighted by the following:

“Politicians and staff [bureaucrats] should directly approach us to participate in public consultation activities. This would develop a relationship between us and the government—the politicians and staff—which would benefit everyone involved. We would feel as though our participation is important in developing the community and there would be a greater level of participation. I also think that it would be a better use of resources for the municipality. It would definitely be cheaper to approach community leaders through email than to hope that ads on the radio or in the newspaper would attract the people they want to attract to participate” (Community Leader C, RMWB, 2014).

In this regard, the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo should identify and leverage key individuals and community influencers within ethnic visible minority immigrant communities who bureaucrats and politicians can correspond with in order to get their respective communities more civically engaged. This was expressed in the following comment:

“There are already community leaders that exist within the various communities in the municipality, so what needs to happen is that these individuals needs to be leveraged as important resources for the municipality. [...] Having these key individuals will allow staff and politicians to directly have access to the various minority communities without having to establish relationships because in a way they already exist. The majority of community leaders are already identified by the municipality; they know who we are, they just need to tell us what they need” (Community Leader B, York Region, 2014).

The second most commonly mentioned approach was the provision of translation services during public consultation activities. In addition, it was noted that it is important to provide translated official documents such as pamphlets and executive summaries of plans and policies so that “those individuals with limited English literacy skills could participate in the consultation process and then also read about the outcomes of their participation” (Community Leader C, York Region, 2014). Although having professional translation services was recognized as being “expensive” by half of the community leader informants, it was suggested that both municipalities could recruit individuals who would volunteer their time to provide translation services from the various ethnic visible minority immigrant communities. This was best expressed by the following comment:

“Without doubt professional translation services are expensive or not available for all languages, but the municipality could rely on individuals that have proficient language skills in both English and their mother tongue to volunteer their time and provide these services. [...] People from my [ethnic] community volunteer within the broader community, so I am confident that if approached they would be more than happy to help out in providing translation services for the municipality” (Community Leader B, York Region, 2014).

Finally, the third most commonly mentioned approach was the continued need for the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo to employ a wide range of methods to engage and consult with their respective diverse populations. While traditional methods, such as public meetings, are the most widely used methods by the two municipalities, it was suggested by both municipal officials and community leaders that their respective municipalities are increasingly using a “variety of different” and “newer” methods. The most popular methods mentioned were web-based, with the increased use of social media being described as an emerging and effective way to engage with the public. It should be noted that ten of the twelve municipal official informants stated that their respective municipalities have employed web-based strategies in their efforts to engage and consult with their citizens. In addition, it was cited by some of the community leader informants that, due to cultural and/or religious reasons, some individuals will not participate in community engagement and consultation activities where there is interaction between men and women. However, they would participate within the confines of their own homes or where there are opportunities to interact with members of their own sex only. This was best articulated by the following made by a community leader informant:

“Some individuals are more orthodox in their beliefs and for this reason they will not interact with members of the opposite sex, unless they are members of their own family. However, this doesn’t mean that they do not want to be engaged in the public consultation process, they just require a different way to do it. This means that the municipality needs to find alternative ways to engage those people that need some accommodation. [...] Having public meetings where there are only members of the same-sex would be a good solution, or increasing the use social media would be useful too” (Community Leader A, RMWB, 2014).

The three approaches discussed above do not necessarily constitute best practice in terms of increasing public engagement with ethnic visible immigrant communities in the two regional municipalities. Instead, it is important that municipal officials remain responsive and fluid in their approach as the diverse social composition of the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo continues to evolve.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Canadian Gas Tax Agreements, and the subsequent development of Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs), were “designed to accelerate the shift in local planning and decision-making toward more long-term, coherent and participatory approaches to achieve sustainable communities” (Planning for Sustainable Canadian Communities Roundtable, 2005: 4). These are multi-sector collaborations involving the federal and provincial governments providing funding, municipal governments contributing leadership and resources, and local citizens volunteering their knowledge, time and commitment. Part of a larger global movement to become sustainable, the ICSP is a product of the current era where there exists the concern and awareness of the impacts of human activities on the environment within policy and politics. This is evident through the creation and implementation of environmental policies at all levels of government from local municipalities developing sustainability related planning policies to international environmental agreements. As with other municipalities in Canada, the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo contributed to the increased political and social awareness of environmental concern by producing their respective ICSPs as a resource for sustainable development for their communities. Rather than rename a standard strategic plan or have administration “fill in the blanks”, ICSPs are intended to be an opportunity to “broaden the scope of factors considered, lengthen the timeframe, and encourage participation and collaboration through participatory techniques” (Planning for Sustainable Canadian Communities Roundtable, 2005: 4).

Both the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo have large ethnic visible minority immigrant populations in relation to their current total populations. In addition, both municipalities are projected to continue to grow in total population with the direct settlement of

ethnic visible minority immigrants being the most significant reason for this growth. While historically immigrants tended to be low-skilled with minimal resources, current ethnic visible minority immigrants in both municipalities tend to be highly-skilled and educated, resource-rich individuals. Furthermore, the ethnic visible minority immigrant populations in the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo have a transnational character due the circulation and flow of commodities and capital from source countries and Canada, aided by ethnic commercial activities, including financial institutions providing various banking services such as remittance services. As such, both the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo can be considered “ethnoburbs”, which are conceptualized as suburban areas with a high concentration of ethnic residents as well as ethnic business districts and networks (Li, 1998). However, the increased social diversity that both municipalities are experiencing has also presented a challenge of how to engage and consult with their large ethnic visible minority immigrant populations in trying to develop and implement their respective ICSPs, the *York Region Sustainability Strategy: Towards a Sustainable Region* and the *Envision Wood Buffalo Plan*, and planning policy more broadly.

As the findings of this study have highlighted, there are opportunities for both the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo to include their respective ethnic visible minority immigrant populations in the development and implementation of policy, especially sustainability planning policy, in a manner that is culturally adequate and appropriate. As such, it can be stated that both municipalities have lacked the bureaucratic and political responsiveness to facilitate and nurture citizen participation in the development and implementation of their respective ICSPs. While providing opportunities for citizen collaboration within the decision-making process democratizes the planning process, it has been established that these

opportunities are provided through bureaucratic behaviour and responsiveness. As such, culturally appropriate and adequate response to the changing social composition in the two municipalities in terms of engagement and consultation opportunities for their citizens heavily rely on the actions and willingness of bureaucrats. It is important to note that bureaucrats and their responsiveness to facilitate greater citizen participation are also constrained by external forces such as limited resources and organizational and political structures that can hinder their abilities to support greater citizen involvement in policy development and implementation.

As the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo continue to witness increased social diversity, they require new approaches to public engagement and consultation in their attempts to become sustainable communities. As such, four recommendations will be made that may be useful to the two municipalities when developing new approaches to public engagement and consultation, especially as it pertains to sustainability planning policy, and planning policy more broadly. These recommendations have been synthesized from what has been previously mentioned within the literature on sustainable development and public administration and the findings from the semi-structured interviews with the community leader informants in both the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo.

First, a broader definition of “sustainability” needs to be embraced which incorporates the pluralistic meanings of the term to various stakeholders and their relationship with the process of becoming sustainable. This definition would be inclusive of the various ethno-cultural definitions of sustainability, rather than just the dominant Euro-centric definition that is predominant within the current global sustainable development and sustainability discourse. This recommendation can also be extended when defining other planning policy objectives and outcomes. The second recommendation is that there needs to be a willingness and ability by

bureaucrats to re-examine and challenge the status quo in public consultation and engagement practices in order to create community-based processes of social engagement in planning and action that are essential to creating more sustainable, inclusive and democratic communities. In this respect, as Arnstein (1969) notes, there would be a higher level of citizen participation such as “partnership”, or “citizen power”, especially as it relates to how citizens are included in the development and implementation of policy. The third recommendation is that there needs to be a variety of platforms for citizens to participate in public engagement and consultation activities. Beyond the traditional approaches to consultation and engagement, such as public meetings, there needs to be the incorporation of newer approaches such as using web-based and social media platforms that allow citizens to participate in public engagement and consultation activities through methods that suit their cultural needs and preferences. Therefore, instead of being told how to engage, citizens would be given the opportunity to participate in a way that suits them, which could lead to greater levels of citizen involvement in public consultation and engagement activities. Finally, it is recommended that there should be greater interdepartmental communication and collaboration so that bureaucrats can assess the efficiency and effectiveness of current institutional practices of public engagement and consultation. Furthermore, this would ensure that there is consistency among the various departments in both municipalities and that there are monitoring mechanisms in place. These monitoring mechanisms would guarantee that there is compliance with established public engagement and consultation policy and procedures¹⁴. As such, as the Regional Municipalities of York and Wood Buffalo continue to grow in population, greater interdepartmental communication and collaboration among bureaucrats in both municipalities will allow for a more timely and efficient response to the changing social fabric of the two municipalities.

CONCLUSION

This paper represents an attempt to bridge the knowledge gap in regard to the response by municipalities to the changes on direct immigrant settlement patterns in the Toronto CMA and the Canadian Polar region in terms of citizen engagement and consultation in the development of sustainability planning policy and sustainable development. As Canada's population continues to grow, with the growth projected to largely come from international migration by ethnic visible minorities, the use of culturally adequate and appropriate engagement and consultation approaches will be pivotal to ensure that the planning process is inclusive and democratic. As such, this paper acts as a starting point for further research and discussion on how to appropriately and adequately engage and consult diverse populations with sustainability planning policies. Further research and discussion could include how web-based and social media approaches affect participation rates in public engagement and consultation in sustainability planning policy amongst visible minorities and the host population and whether there are any differences amongst them; whether there are any changes in policy outcomes when a pluralistic definition of "sustainability" is used within planning policies in terms of stakeholder engagement; and as an ethnic group how aboriginal peoples are engaged and consulted when developing and implementation sustainability planning policy, especially within the Canadian Polar region. Continued research and discussion on how to better engage and consult citizens within the planning process will ensure the planning practice and practitioners, governments, and society as a whole are working towards becoming more democratic and inclusive.

NOTES

¹ The term “visible minority” is used in the Canadian census to refer to non-white, non-Aboriginal, non-Caucasian racial minorities (Burayidi, 2000).

² Ekers, Hamel and Keil (2011:4) state that suburbs can be defined as a “generic term to incorporate all manner of peripheral growth”, and in addition as a human settlement form the suburb “is always differentiated and assumes many hybrid forms”.

³ Here, it should be noted as Kobayashi and Peake (2000:392) argue that there needs to be sensitivity to the way in which “racialization is part of the normal, and normalized, landscape” at all scales of human activity, not something confined to just geography or acts of racially motivated violence. They note that the histories and cultural practices associated with whiteness are so deeply normalized in everyday life that “white” difference becomes virtually indiscernible, so much so that whiteness becomes the invisible backdrop against which all “other” practices appear different, or in some way “out of place” (Ibid.). In this regard, ethnic should refer to both visible and non-visible minorities (including those most often referred to as “white”, such as English, Irish and Scottish) as ethnicity refers to “the kind of people we are”, whereby it refers to the descent of communities: the linguistic, religious, racial and cultural characteristics, customs and costumes that define a group (Fenton, 2010: 12).

⁴ As Luk (2008:37) asserts, the concept of “diaspora” can be seen as “an active agent in the making of transnationalism”; however it has various interpretations across various disciplines and that as a “contemporary phenomenon of dislocation and regeneration” it is more “dynamic and unpredictable, signifying the intricacies between the host and home countries facilitated by the globalizing process” (Ibid.: 38). Ma (2003) identifies modern-day diasporas as the dispersion and migration of ethnic minority groups originating from a common homeland, sharing a collective culture, and retaining linkages in some form to their ancestral homeland, however residing in a foreign geographic region. In this sense the diaspora of ethnic migrant minority groups has meant different things at different times and to different people with different socioeconomic characteristics and geographic origins (Skeldon, 2003).

⁵ The term of “resurgent ethnicity” was first defined and empirically articulated by Logan, Alba and Zhang (2002). It addresses the reasons behind the persistence of segregation, even after structural causes associated with housing and racial discrimination, and prejudicial preferences have been addressed to remove or ameliorate them.

⁶ It needs to be noted that aboriginality is excluded within this study’s discussion of ethnicity and “ethnoburbs”. However, it is important to recognize that a pan-Aboriginal identity which seeks to “establish a common socio-cultural heritage” (Fryer-Smith, 2002: 3:4) does not address the complexity of the heterogeneity of Aboriginal peoples. It is also important to recognize that a crucial area of study (especially in the Northern Canada) is the impacts of colonialism on Aboriginal people, such as rights to land claims (e.g. Nadasdy, 2002; Usher, 2003; Anderson et

al., 2006) and self-determination (e.g. Coulthard, 2007; Corntassel and Holder, 2008; Walker, 2008), which are beyond the scope of the proposed study.

⁷ Approval was granted by the York University Office of Research Ethics on 16 April 2014. The certificate number for this research is: 2014-107. Should there be the need for further information regarding the approval of this research you may contact Alison M. Collins-Mrakas, Sr. Manager and Policy Advisor, Office of Research Ethics via phone at: 416-736-5914 or via email at: acollins@yorku.ca. General information regarding York University's policies for the conducting of research involving human participants can be found at: <http://www.yorku.ca/research/support/ethics/humans.html>.

⁸ Ontario's *Municipal Act, 2001* defines upper-municipality as “a municipality of which two or more lower-tier municipalities form part for municipal purposes.”

⁹ Specialized municipalities are unique municipal structures that can be formed under the authority of Section 83 of the *Municipal Government Act, 2000*. Both urban and rural communities are often allowed to coexist in a single municipal government.

¹⁰ This figure represents the total population as reported during the *2012 Municipal Census: Count Yourself In!*, which had a 95.5% completion rate. The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has also published a population figure of 80,255 people (76,009 people in the Urban Service Area and 4,216 people in the Rural Service Area) which was extrapolated to represent a 100% completion rate of the census.

¹¹ The non-permanent resident population, or shadow population, consists of individuals employed within the Athabasca Oil Sands projects and reside within work camps and work campgrounds. Their accommodations are provided by oil sand companies are located within unincorporated areas of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. For a more detailed discussion on the non-permanent resident population see: Hann and Odynak, 2010; Dorow and Dogu, 2011; Ruddell, 2011; Foster and Taylor, 2013.

¹² As Wang (1999: 28), aptly puts it there is lack in the literature for a standard definition of “ethnic commercial activity”. While there is research on “ethnic businesses” or “ethnic enterprises”, they often include a wide range of economic activities undertaken by ethnic minorities, anywhere from retailing and consumer services to manufacturing and even farming operations. However, it is understood that ethnic commercial activity consists of establishments that are owned or operated by members of minority ethnic groups and that are oriented towards consumers of the same ethnicity.

¹³ As Roseland delineates, natural capital “refers to any stock of natural assets that yield a flow of valuable goods and services” (1999:191).

¹⁴ This recommendation is supported by the *Accountability, Integrity and Transparency Audit* which KMPG conducted for the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (see KPMG, 2014: 5-6 and 32-36). The objective of the Audit was to act as a “health-check” of current practices of the municipality and benchmarking them against leading practices and provide recommendations for

improving and enhancing current policies and procedures. On September 23, 2014, the Council of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo received the results of the Audit.

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APPENDIX A

Figure 1

Geographic Source of Immigrants to Canada, 1971 to 2006

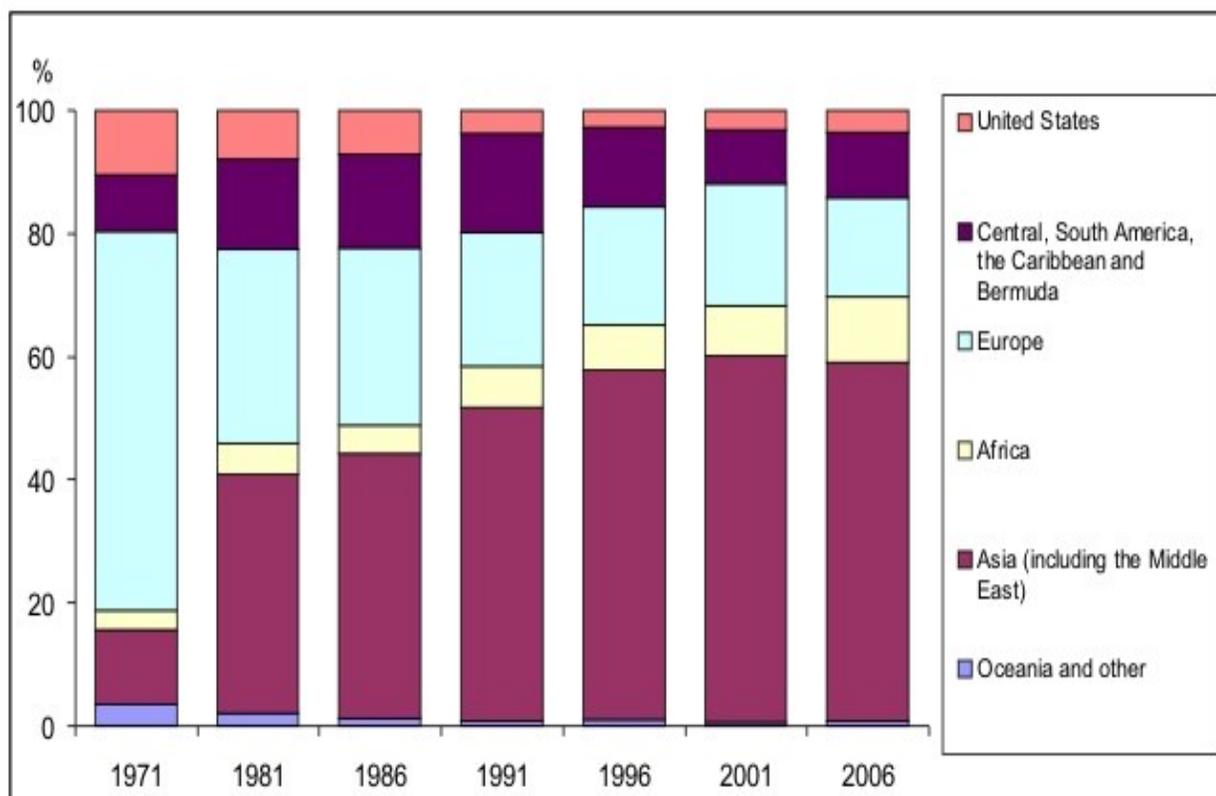


Image Source: Statistics Canada. (2009). Region of Birth of Recent Immigrants to Canada, 1971 to 2006. *Censuses of Population, 1971 to 2006*.

APPENDIX B

Figure 2

Campbell's Planner's Triangle

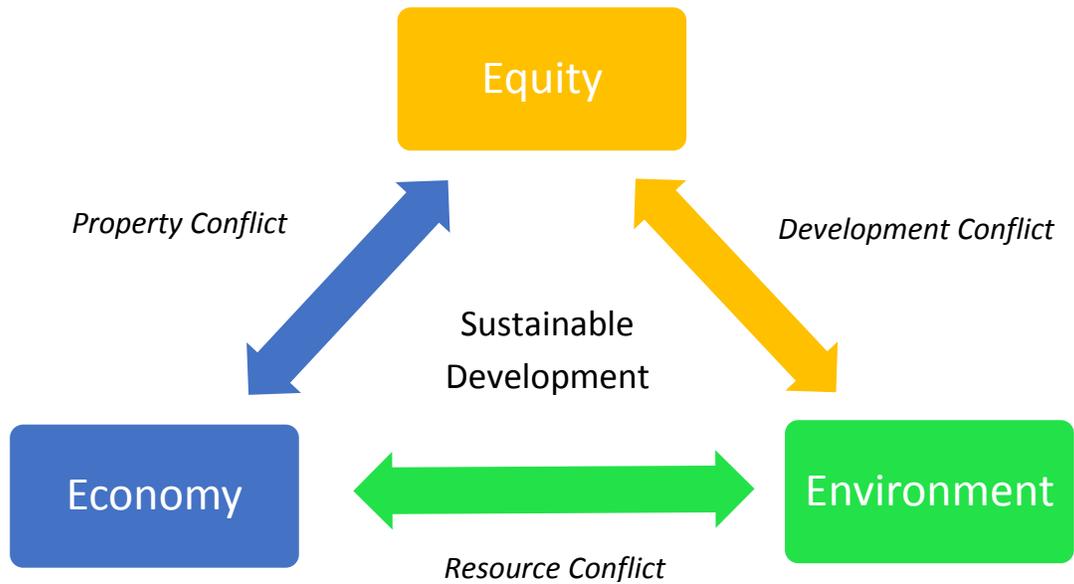
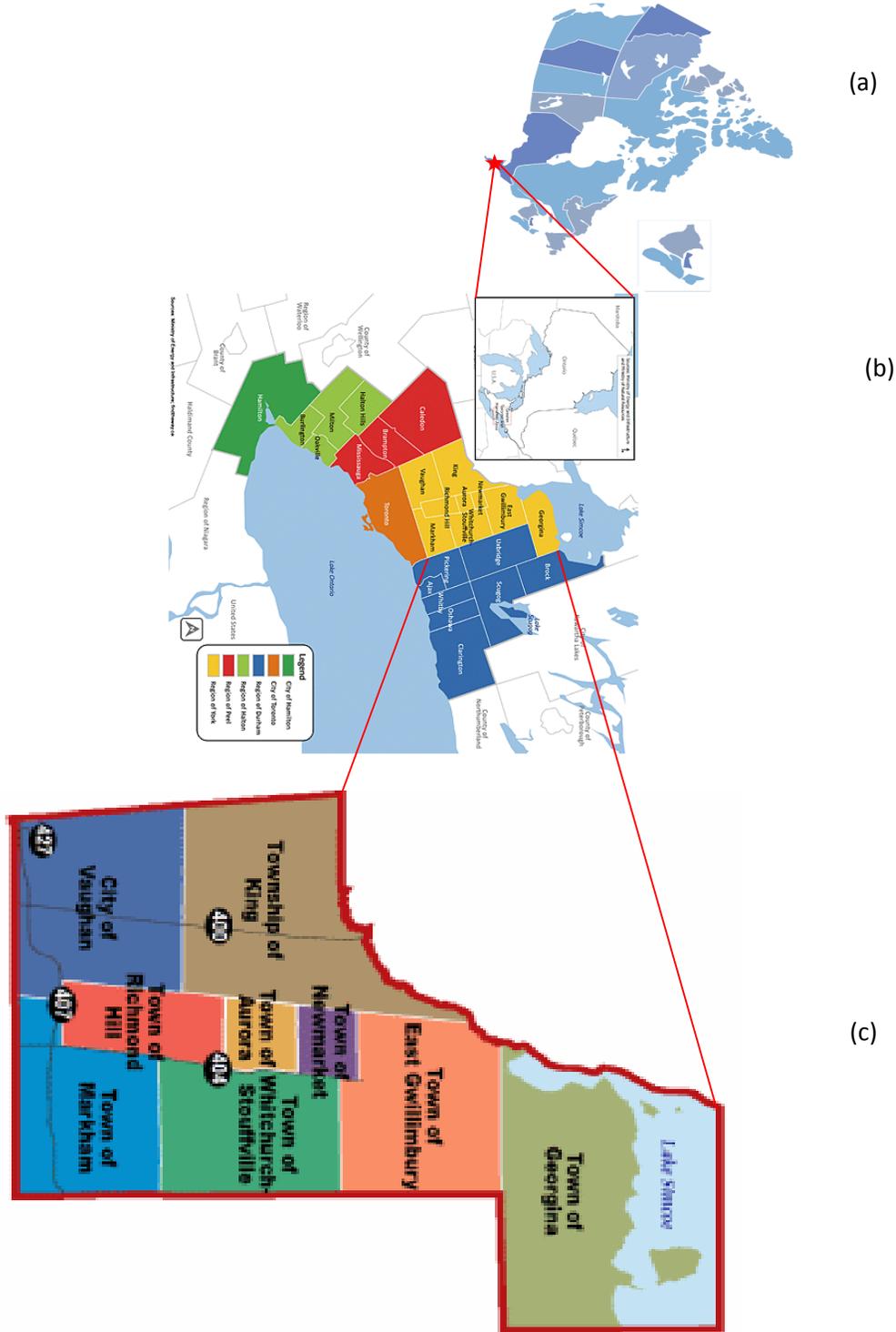


Image Source: Adapted from Campbell (1996). Green Cities, Growing Cities, Just Cities?: Urban Planning and the Contradictions of Sustainable Development. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 62, 3.

APPENDIX C

Figure 3

Map of the Regional Municipality of York in the National and Provincial Context



APPENDIX D

Table 1

Top Five Source Countries for Immigrants in the Regional Municipality of York Between 2006 and 2011

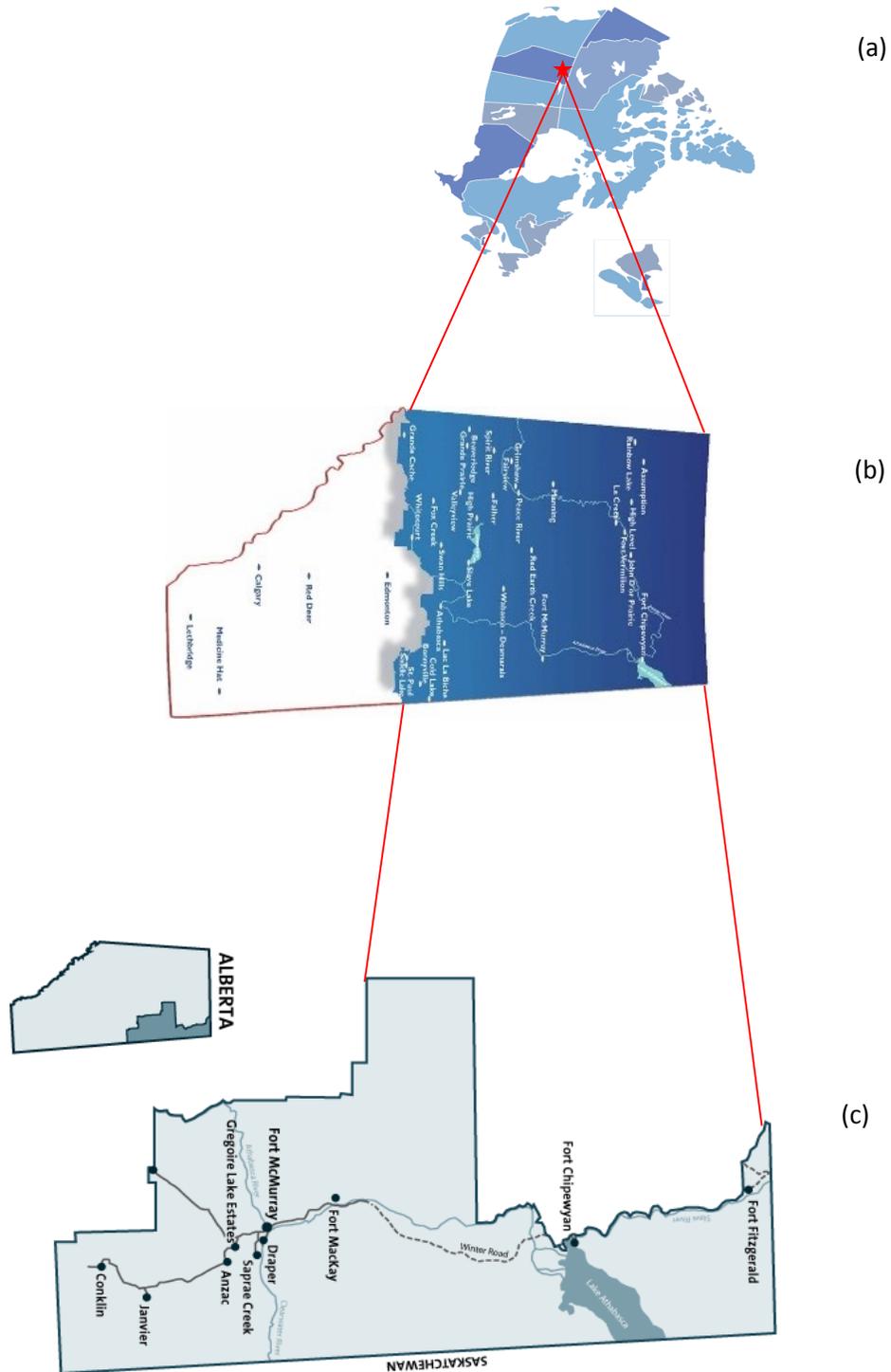
Country	Total Number of People	Total % of Immigrant Population
China	12,305	35
Iran	4,475	12.7
India	2,985	8.5
Philippines	2,970	8.4
Sri Lanka	2,095	6

Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada. (2012). *York, Ontario Census Profile 2011 Census*.

APPENDIX E

Figure 4

Map of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo in the National and Provincial Context



APPENDIX F

Table 2

Top Five Source Countries for Immigrants in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Since 2006

Country	Total Number of People	Total % of Immigrant Population
India	690	19
Philippines	555	15.2
Pakistan	330	9.1
Venezuela	275	7.6
South Africa	200	5.5

Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada. (2013). Wood Buffalo, SM, Alberta: National Household Survey (NHS) Profile. *2011 National Household Survey*.