

2 OVERVIEW OF **COMMUNITY SNAPSHOTS: RECENT IMMIGRANTS LIVING IN YORK REGION REPORT**

(Regional Council at its meeting on April 27, 2006 adopted the following Clause and the presentation by Commissioner Simmons providing a brief overview of the Community Snapshots Report be received. Highlights of the Report were given by Cordelia Abankwa-Harris, Director of Policy and Program Support Services.)

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends that:

1. The presentation by Cordelia Abankwa-Harris, Director of Policy and Program Support Services and Craig Piper, Senior Program Analyst regarding '*Community Snapshots: Recent Immigrants Living in York Region Report*' be received.
2. the recommendations contained in the following report, April 3, 2006, from the Commissioner of Community Services, Housing and Health Services be adopted, with the addition of Recommendation Nos. 3 and 4 as follows:
 3. the Regional Chair, on behalf of Regional Council appoint, if possible, a corporate York Region representative to represent York Region's interests by participating in the Association of Municipalities of Ontario Municipal Immigration Committee and the Canada-Ontario Working Groups
 4. York Region participate in stakeholder strategy consultations

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The *Community Snapshots: Recent Immigrants Living In York Region* report (*Attachment 1*) be circulated to Provincial and Federal Ministers of Citizenship and Immigration, local Members of Parliament, local Members of Provincial Parliament, local area municipalities, members of the York Region Community Reference Group (CRG) and the Human Services Planning Coalition (HSPC) by Community Services and Housing Department staff.
2. The Regional Municipality of York participate in the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement discussions through the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)

and continue to participate in the Inter-Governmental Settlement Strategy Leadership Team.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to summarize highlights of the *Community Snapshots: Recent Immigrants Living in York Region* report, prepared by Community Services and Housing Department staff. This report primarily uses Statistics Canada Census 2001 data obtained through the Canadian Social Data Strategy (CSDS) to provide a socio-economic profile of recent immigrants in York Region.

A brochure will also be prepared to inform the general public about this Community Snapshots report.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Community Social Data Strategy (CSDS)

York Region is a participant in the Canadian Council on Social Development's CSDS. The CSDS provides a gateway for municipalities and community-based organizations to access data from Statistics Canada in order to identify and better understand the social and economic trends within their individual communities.

Fifteen communities across Canada participate in the CSDS. These communities are: Calgary, Edmonton, Halton Region, Hamilton, London, Montreal, Ottawa, Peterborough, Red Deer, Peel Region, Simcoe County, Toronto, Vancouver, Waterloo Region, and York Region.

3.1.1 The Consortium

The fifteen communities noted above have partnered with community agencies and organizations to form consortiums to administer their project, and to produce products that benefit their communities broadly.

In order to focus and streamline processes, as well as have results available in a timely manner, York Region's Consortium is small. York Region's Consortium is comprised of The Regional Municipality of York (Lead Member), the York Region District School Board, the York Catholic District School Board, York Regional Police, and the United Way of York Region.

The Consortium, as the legal owner of the CSDS data, has the role of deciding what will be produced and how the data will be shared with the community. While there is always a lead data/product developer, all members of the Consortium contribute staff time to product development.

The knowledge gained through the data is intended to support the Community Services and Housing Department's mandate and to promote service and community program design that is more responsive to York Region's changing demographics. Any CSDS data and any products that the Community Services and Housing Department creates will focus on increasing the Region's, community agencies', and organizations' knowledge of the social and economic conditions of the diverse communities in York Region.

3.1.2 The Community Reference Group

The Consortium seeks even broader community input and consultation by inviting organizations with links to a variety of stakeholder agencies to function as part of a Community Reference Group (CRG). This allows organizations that have access to a broad range of partner agencies and organizations, but who may not be eligible to be Consortium members, to participate. The CRG is comprised of Big Brothers/Big Sisters, the Catholic Community Services-Immigrant Services, Markham Board of Trade, HSPC, the York/South Simcoe Training and Adjustment Board, and includes the Consortium.

Immigrants and recent immigrants in particular, are, and will continue to account for a significant portion of York Region's growth. This will impact on all sectors of the Region. Given this, the CRG felt it was crucial to develop an understanding of the socio-economic characteristics of recent immigrants living in York Region.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Community Snapshots: Recent Immigrants Living in York Region

The report, using data obtained through the Canadian Council on Social Development's CSDS, looks at the socio-economic characteristics of recent immigrants including demographics, employment, income, education, language, housing, use of public transit, and religion. For the purpose of this report, recent immigrants are generally considered to be those who immigrated to Canada between 1996 and 2001.

The report first looks at these socio-economic characteristics for the Region as a whole, and then provides a focused snapshot of Aurora, Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill and Vaughan, where the majority of recent immigrants reside.

4.1.1 Why Focus on Recent Immigrants Now?

There are three key drivers that make the Community Snapshots report timely, useful and necessary:

1. Immigrants are changing the face of communities in York Region dramatically:

- York Region's recent immigrant population is growing at a faster rate than the non-immigrant population.

- Between 1991 and 2001, the number of recent immigrants increased by 132%, while non-immigrants increased by 31%. In 2001, immigrants comprised about 40% of the Region's population.
- Specifically, the data shows that York Region is the fastest growing Census Division in Canada and that in 2004, immigrants (primary and secondary) made up over one-half of the Region's growth (25,400).
- Understanding the composition of the recent immigrant population is important in terms of economic impact. Currently, immigration accounts for about 70% of Canadian labour force growth and it's estimated that it will account for 100% of the net labour force growth by 2011 (*Source: Statistics Canada/McMaster University Meds Projection System, 2004*).

2. There is a need to understand and respond to the change that is occurring in immigration patterns in York Region:

- Data shows that, at an increasing rate, immigrants are coming directly to York Region from their countries of origin, rather than starting the integration process in another part of the country before moving here.
- Evidence shows that when a greater emphasis is placed on strategically providing settlement and integration support to recent immigrants, the more quickly they start and keep contributing positively to their community and to the economy.
- Services have generally not increased or changed enough to address the pace and migration patterns of immigrants coming to York Region.
- The mismatch between immigrant's needs and available services can have significant impact on municipalities; indirectly in terms of economic development and quality of life, and potentially directly (eg. in terms of social assistance costs and public health costs).

3. Funding and Leadership Opportunity:

- The recently signed Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement provides a timely opportunity to use information in the Community Snapshots report to assist in discussions regarding immigrant issues. As described in Section 4.6 of this report, municipalities have been invited to take part in the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement discussions.

4.1.2 What are the Issues and Opportunities?

Immigrant migration has been a boon to York Region. The data shows that established immigrants do as well, or better than non-immigrants, in terms of their rates of employment, level of education and income earnings. The data also shows that recent

immigrants in York Region are generally highly skilled and well-educated. Immigrants are accounting for an increasing percentage of labour force growth, and this trend is expected to continue.

However, in York Region, the results of changing immigration patterns, increased pace of arrival, limited supports, and lack of service information (who they are and where they live) to adequately plan to use limited resources to their best advantage are beginning to show. The data shows that recent immigrants to York Region, despite generally having comparable, or higher, educational skills are not doing as well as established immigrants or non-immigrants. This means that their chances of continuing to contribute positively to York Region's economy and way of life, as they have in the past, are in danger.

A recent research paper prepared by Statistics Canada ("*Return and Onward Migration among Working Age Men*", Statistics Canada, 2006) shows that over one-third (35%) of working age men (age 25 to 45 at time of landing) move back to their source countries within 20 years after arrival, and 60% of those who move back, do so within one year of coming to Canada. Since these are primarily skilled workers and business class immigrants, we can assume that they return because they are unable to find jobs commensurate with their skills.

There are challenges, but also great opportunities. York Region is in an excellent position to turn its growing diversity and highly educated immigrant population into a competitive advantage, in an era of increased globalization if we can meet the challenges of change.

4.2 Key Highlights of Community Snapshots Report

Demographics

- Between 1991 and 2001, the recent immigrant population grew by 132% compared to 31% for the non-immigrant population.
- About 2/3 of recent immigrants are of working age (i.e. generally considered to be 15 to 54 years) and are in a position to contribute to the economy. Many are also of an age when they bring their families or start families here. This, coupled with the fact that they are the fastest growing segment of the population, is an indication of the influence they will have on the look, feel and composition of York Region.
- Recent immigrants are more likely to be married or to have been married than the non-immigrant population.
- Recent immigrants are quick to assume citizenship rights. Three out of five recent immigrants are Canadian citizens.
- Most recent immigrants are visible minorities. Chinese immigrants are the most commonly represented visible minority group.

- Recent immigrants are twice as likely to live with relatives as part of an extended family than the total populations. This could have implications for the way York Region plans communities and provides and publicizes available services and programs.

Education

- York Region's recent immigrant population generally attends school at a higher rate than the total population.
- Recent immigrants generally have a higher level of education than non-immigrants.
- Despite this, recent immigrants generally earn less than non-immigrants regardless of level of education. For example, a recent immigrant with a university education earns an average of \$38,400 compared to \$63,800 for non-immigrants.

Employment and Income

- York Region ranks third amongst GTA municipalities in terms of median employment income.
- Despite their generally higher education levels, recent immigrants in York Region have the second lowest average median total income amongst GTA municipalities, second only to Toronto.
- In York Region, the average median total income for recent immigrants is \$14,449 compared to \$30,212 for the non-immigrant population, despite their generally higher levels of education.
- York Region's recent immigrant population is almost three times as likely as non-immigrants to be within the low income cut-off.

However,

- Immigrants living in York Region who have been in Canada for over 15 years have a lower incidence of low-income than the total population.
- The data indicates that immigrants, although highly educated and skilled, are economically vulnerable during the first years after their arrival. Data in the report points to the need to focus integration efforts in the first few years after arrival; especially given the changing pace and patterns of immigration to York Region.

Language

- Over 10,000 (11%) of recent immigrants in York Region have no knowledge of either official language. This is the highest rate amongst GTA municipalities.
- In York Region, approximately 3,300 of recent immigrant children (19 years and under), have no knowledge of either official language.

- Cantonese is the single most common non-official language spoken at home and at work by recent immigrants in York Region.

Religion

- Knowledge of religion provides a sense of the make up, service needs and backgrounds of the Region's recent immigrant population. For example, recreation services, such as swimming, could be used very differently by Muslims than by those of other religious affiliations (e.g. no mixed gender swimming pools).
- The most common religious affiliations for recent immigrants are "No Religion", followed by Roman Catholic and Muslim. This is different from York Region's total population, which cite Roman Catholic, followed by "No Religion", Jewish and United Church.

Housing

- In York Region, 87% of recent immigrant households (1991-2001) are homeowners and 12% are renters. In comparison, 90% of the total population households are homeowners and 10% are renters.
- Recent immigrants, probably due to lower income levels, are more likely to spend a greater proportion of their household income on all types of housing.

Transit

- In York Region, one of the most common modes of transportation to work for recent immigrants is public transit.

4.3 Spatial Distribution of Recent Immigrants – Where are They?

This Community Snapshots report on recent immigrants contains a map showing the spatial distribution of recent immigrants in York Region. The report also contains maps showing the spatial distribution, by census tract, of recent immigrants in the five more urban municipalities, where most immigrants have settled i.e. Aurora, Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill and Vaughan.

The maps show that most recent immigrants have settled in the southern, more urban municipalities. This settlement pattern may be reflective of the availability and proximity to services, employment areas, proximity to Toronto and concentrations of immigrants.

Additional interactive maps are being prepared showing knowledge of official languages, language spoken at home and ethnic origin. All maps, including the spatial distribution maps, will be accessible later this spring on the York Region Community Social Data (YRCSD) web site, which can be accessed through the York Region web site at www.york.ca. The web site will also offer socio-economic data of the general population in York Region. This online resource can assist York Region, local municipalities, community agencies and organizations with program and service planning at a local

level; understanding and assessing community needs; understanding and responding to demographic trends; and, improving research and program development.

4.4 Area Municipalities

The majority of recent immigrants (98%) live in the five more urban municipalities in York Region (Aurora, Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill and Vaughan). This Community Snapshots report provides a profile of recent immigrants living in these municipalities. A few highlights include:

- The Russian Federation is the most common place of birth for recent immigrants in Aurora and Vaughan. Hong Kong is the most common place of birth for recent immigrants in Markham and Richmond Hill. In Newmarket, the United States is the most common place of birth.
- In all five area municipalities, most recent immigrants (67% to 69%) were over 20 years of age (of prime working age, legal voting age, prime child-bearing age).
- Most are Canadian citizens.
- Chinese and South or West Asian are the most common visible minorities in the five urban area municipalities in York Region.
- Regardless of ethnicity, country of origin, or level of education, across the five urban area municipalities, there are consistently higher percentages of recent immigrants that fall within the low income category, compared to the total population of the municipality.

4.5 Service Planning Issues in York Region

Recent immigrants face a number of challenges after arriving in Canada. In their efforts to integrate into Canadian society they may face language barriers, cultural differences, different employment qualification standards, lack of knowledge of services, and lack of support networks, to name a few.

The data in this report can have implications for the planning and service provision in York Region. To highlight a few:

- The economic vulnerability of recent immigrants upon arrival highlights the need to strategize and focus on integration efforts during the first years after arrival.
- The reliance of recent immigrants on public transit has implications for how information is provided regarding transit routes and schedules and route selection.
- The country of origin of recent immigrants may have implications for hiring practices in the education field and curriculum development if the education system is to be reflective of the demographics of the community's population.

- The under-representation of recent immigrants in occupations that assist in immigrant integration (e.g. social services, education, government services and religion) points to a need for people in these professions who are representative of the demographic make-up of the community.
- The disproportionate number of recent immigrants in low-paying jobs, despite their relatively high education levels, points to the need to support recent immigrants to find employment that is commensurate with their education and training.
- The pockets of relatively low level English proficiency, along with the change that has occurred in where immigrants are coming from and home languages spoken, may have implications for English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Literacy Development (ELD) courses.
- The lack of affordable housing in York Region, combined with the relatively low income of recent immigrants, makes them vulnerable to financial crisis.

The alternative to effective integration in this fast-changing environment is the possible development of an immigrant underclass/negative subculture. The lack of social and economic integration can lead to isolation, family conflicts, loss of self-esteem, a sense of despair, feelings of alienation, lost wages, productivity, and output, and can increase the need for social assistance. Given that most immigrants are visible minorities, there is also the risk of the racialization of poverty (*Immigrant Settlement and Social Inclusion in Canada, Ratna Omidvar and Ted Richmond, January 2003*) and the development of tension between the “haves” and the “have-nots” along racial lines. Youth are particularly vulnerable to the issues stated above.

4.6 Funding Issues

Service planning for York Region’s quickly diversifying population is a challenge. However, the lack of equitable funding is an equally pressing challenge. York Region has traditionally not been seen or funded as a community with a rapidly increasing number of recent immigrants. It therefore lags far behind Toronto, Vancouver and Peel in meeting current and projected challenges in helping immigrants settle and adapt to life in their new communities. Agencies are stretched to capacity.

Federal and provincial funding for immigrant services in York Region has declined from \$416 per capita in 2001/2002 to \$179 in 2004/2005. In contrast, in the year 2001/2002, Peel received \$909 and Durham received \$751 per immigrant (*Source: Statistics Canada information provided by Catholic Community Services for York Region*).

In 2005, federal and provincial governments signed an agreement that provides a new deal for immigration services funding. The current federal government has indicated that it will honour this deal. The agreement recognizes the importance that municipal services have on the successful settlement and integration of recent immigrants. The agreements

also recognize the need for municipal involvement in the discussion of how to support integration locally, including seeking municipal input on the planning of a more seamless and coordinated delivery of federal and provincial services.

York Region's municipal comparators are preparing information on their immigrant population. This will allow them to take advantage of funding and participate in upcoming discussions so that services can be appropriately designed. The provincial government is also actively involved on a staff level, and strategizing on a provincial level. Most recently, in February 2005, a three day policy forum was held to address immigration from the provincial perspective.

This Community Snapshots report provides data to strategically pursue an increased level of funding for settlement services in keeping with the new agreement. If York Region (government and community) is successful, the average annual spending on settlement services could grow to the new provincial average of approximately \$3,400 per immigrant per year.

4.7 Next Steps

On Regional Council endorsement, the Community Snapshots report will be released and circulated to other regional departments, area municipalities, consortium members, community groups, school boards, and the HSPC and the HSPC Inclusivity Action Plan Committees. A brochure will also be released to inform the general public about the findings of the report. A communications strategy has been prepared to ensure maximum awareness of the report and its findings.

With Council's endorsement, the report will also be shared with the federal and provincial government, and will be used to inform upcoming discussions regarding immigrant issues.

The report will also be used as a baseline for monitoring and planning for the progress of recent immigrants over time as new data becomes available through Statistics Canada's 2006 Census.

4.8 Relationship to Vision 2026

This report responds to *Vision 2026's* goal of "Quality Communities for a Diverse Population". It supports a number of York Region initiatives regarding diversity, as well as work being carried out by the HSPC, generally, and the Inclusivity Action Plan committees, specifically.

The common thread between the various initiatives is the recognition of the need to understand and plan for York Region's diverse population. This will allow for York Region to continue benefiting, as it has in the past, from the contributions of recent immigrants.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications associated with this report, but the Community Snapshots report provides valuable information that can allow for more effective service planning, and for supporting a position on increased funding for recent immigrant settlement services.

In Canada, immigration currently accounts for 70% of net labour force growth. In 2004, immigrants comprised over one-half of York Region's growth. This trend is forecasted to increase. Clearly, focussing on effective service planning and funding will allow York Region to reap benefits on a variety of levels.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The Community Snapshots report provides a profile of recent immigrants in the five urban area municipalities in the southern part of the Region – Aurora, Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill and Vaughan. Recent immigrants in the remaining municipalities of East Gwillimbury, Georgina, King and Whitchurch-Stouffville account for a growing, but much smaller percentage, of the recent immigrant population in York Region.

The data in this Community Snapshots report, and on the corresponding web site, can be used by area municipalities to assist them with service planning.

7. CONCLUSION

The Community Snapshots report provides a socio-economic profile of recent immigrants living in York Region. The report shows that immigrants, although generally highly educated and skilled, are vulnerable during the first years after their arrival. Data in the report points to the need to focus integration efforts in the first few years after arrival, to ensure immigrants' ability to more quickly contribute to the economy, community and quality of life in York Region.

Early and efficient integration of recent immigrants is important to municipalities. A mismatch between residents' needs and available services can have significant impacts on municipalities, especially when the residents are large contributors to growth and have unique service needs. These impacts can impact indirectly on economic development and quality of life, and potentially directly, in terms of community social assistance costs and public health costs.

The release of the Community Snapshots report on recent immigrants is very timely, given the rapid rate of growth of recent immigrants in York Region, the increasing number of immigrants who come directly to York Region, and the invitation to

municipalities from the federal and provincial governments to participate in upcoming discussions regarding immigrant issues and associated funding.

It is hoped that this report will:

- Assist agencies, organizations, and municipalities that provide services and programs to recent immigrants understand the needs of that population so programs and services can be designed accordingly.
- Inform agencies, organizations, municipalities and the general public about the changing nature of York Region's population to support cultural awareness and sensitivity.
- Provide background information for community advocacy initiatives regarding settlement services and the need for additional funding.
- Provide a baseline for monitoring the progress of recent immigrants over time as new data becomes available.
- Help employers gain more information on the skills, education levels, fields of expertise and needs of the recent immigrant labour pool in York Region and their potential to contribute to the Region's economy.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)