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IMPLEMENTATION OF YORK REGION IMMIGRATION SETTLEMENT STRATEGY: PROGRAM UPDATE AND RELEASE OF COMMUNITY PORTRAITS: IMMIGRANTS LIVING IN YORK REGION WOMEN, YOUTH, SENIORS, AND FRANCOPHONES

The Community and Health Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated February 16, 2012, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. *Community Portraits: Immigrants Living in York Region - Women, Youth, Seniors, and Francophones* (see Council Attachment 1) be circulated to the Federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the members of the Community Partnership Council, the York Region Community Reference Group and the Human Services Planning Board of York Region.
2. The Regional Chair, on behalf of Council, request that Citizenship and Immigration Canada increase York Region's funding allocation for programs so that it is reflective of the Region's growing immigrant population.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Regional Council with an update on the implementation of the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* (Strategy) including the status of initial actions, and community engagement, and the release of *Community Portraits: Immigrants Living in York Region – Women, Youth, Senior, and Francophones* (Community Portraits).

3. BACKGROUND

The *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* was developed in collaboration with the Community Partnership Council

The *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* was approved by Council in September, 2011 through the adoption of Clause No. 5 of Report No. 7 of the Community and Health Services Committee. This Strategy was developed in collaboration with the

Community Partnership Council and in consultation with almost 2,000 community stakeholders.

The Community Partnership Council is a multi-sectoral collaborative planning table that was appointed by Council in February, 2010. This body involves key stakeholders such as settlement and language training providers, school boards, employer planning tables, local municipalities, police services and all three levels of government. It is co-chaired by Mayor Frank Scarpitti, Town of Markham, and Stephen Lam, Director of Immigrant Services and Community Programs, Catholic Community Services of York Region.

The Strategy sets a long-term vision and priorities for the well-being of newcomers. The priorities support the successful economic, social, cultural, civic and political integration through a community that is welcoming and inclusive. The Strategy was developed under the Local Immigration Partnership initiative, funded through Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

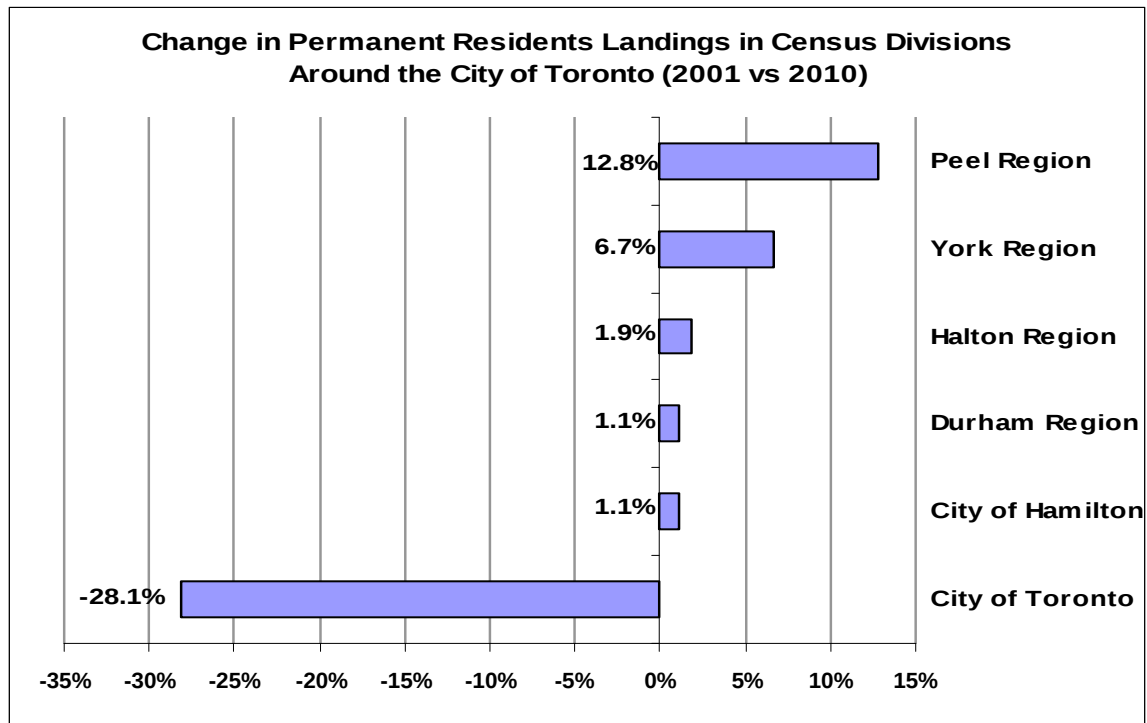
In addition to the release of Community Portraits, several initial actions to support the priorities of the Strategy were identified, including:

- Maximizing the use of the York Region Immigration Portal
- Creation of a funders table that will help identify and guide community investments
- Exploring an Internationally Educated Professionals Conference
- Establishing a Municipal Diversity Reference Group
- Conducting research to identify the multi-lingual barriers faced by newcomers in accessing health care service (Central Local Health Integration Network Research Project)

Between 2001 and 2010 Toronto experienced a 28 per cent decrease in the immigrant population, whereas York Region has experienced almost a seven per cent increase.

On average 10,000 – 12,000 newcomers directly land in York Region each year. This has been estimated to contribute to a third of the Region's annual growth since 2006. Graph 1 below shows the change in permanent landings in the Greater Toronto Area.

Graph 1



Source: Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, 2011

Federal funding for settlement programs in York Region has been reduced

On November 25, 2011, the federal government announced that the 2012-13 funding allocation for settlement services in Ontario will be reduced by approximately \$31 million. Over the past two years, funding has been reduced in Ontario, reflecting the fact that Ontario's proportional share of immigration in Canada has gone from 64 per cent in 2005 to 52 per cent in 2010.

Although, York Region has seen increases in immigration, settlement programs funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada were reduced by approximately 10 per cent for the 2012-2013 fiscal year. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, funding cuts in York Region were mainly targeted to areas that do not provide direct settlement service supports (e.g. marketing campaigns, etc.). The impacts of these cuts to the settlement sector will vary by agency depending on the types of services they deliver. For example, funding for the Library Settlement Partnership program has been reduced which will impact services widely used by newcomers.

Regional staff have advocated for funding that reflects the needs of the Region through various intergovernmental tables such as the Municipal Immigration Committee, Urban Commissioners and discussions with the regional Citizenship and Immigration Canada office.

It is anticipated that many Local Immigration Partnership initiatives across Ontario will experience a reduction in funding. For instance, for the 2012-2013 fiscal year Durham Region, City of Peterborough, Simcoe County and York Region budgets were reduced by approximately 40 per cent. In the City of Toronto, the 17 neighbourhood-based Local Immigration Partnership initiatives have been reduced to four.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Early successes will strengthen the community results of the Strategy

Despite these cutbacks, the depth of the Strategy has allowed York Region to build partnerships with other levels of government and leverage funding from other provincial and federal sources to begin initial actions.

The Strategy has been received positively by stakeholders in the community including funders. The use of a Results Based Accountability framework and the leadership from Council for the Strategy has been recognized by many as a good practice.

The Community Partnership Council has been developing initial actions since the Strategy was released to help build momentum and capacity within organizations across the Region. In addition to the early actions identified in the Strategy, York Region has received funding from the Central Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) to conduct a research study to identify solutions to address multi-lingual barriers for newcomers accessing health care services.

The Region will also contribute to the development of the Central LHIN Newcomer Strategy through participation on their planning group.

The release of the Community Portraits will help organizations and groups in York Region to better design programs and services

Citizenship and Immigration Canada's *Strategic Plan for Settlement and Language Training* identified that immigrant women, youth, seniors and Francophones have unique settlement needs. Consultations for *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* included further research into these groups to gain a better understanding of their settlement and integration needs. As a result, specific priorities were set in the Strategy to address these needs. Research for the Community Portraits also expanded on the findings from the *Changing Landscapes: Recent Immigrants Living in York Region* that was released in September, 2011.

Community Portraits incorporates the most recent data available on immigrants living in York Region including 2010 landing data, 2031 population forecasts using the 2006 Census, the results of the consultations undertaken for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* in 2010 and a current literature review.

In February 2012, Statistics Canada released the first data from the 2011 Census. This data shows that in 2011 York Region's population was 1,032,524, an increase of 16 per cent since 2006. New data from the 2011 Census will be released throughout 2012 but will only include general statistics on population, age and sex, families, households and marital status and language. No information has been given of when more detailed data on immigration from the 2011 Census will be available. Regional staff will continue to monitor the 2011 Census data as it is released and will provide Council with updates, as appropriate.

According to Statistics Canada, since 2001 immigration is a major factor in population growth across Canada. It is estimated that starting in 2031, immigration could account for more than 80 per cent of Canada's population growth, compared to about 67 per cent in 2011. A similar trend will happen in York Region and it is estimated that 55 per cent of York Region residents will be immigrants and 62 per cent will be visible minorities by 2031 (Source: Office of the CAO, Long Range Planning).

Information in the Community Portraits research study provide a better understanding of the unique needs of immigrant women, youth, seniors and Francophones. Key findings include:

- Although recent immigrant women are often highly educated, it is quite common that they take on the caregiver role when moving to Canada. Programs aimed at connecting immigrant women with the community and workforce will assist them to reach their full potential.
- Like most Canadian young people, recent immigrant youth work to balance school and social pressures such as fitting in with their peers. To support their unique needs, additional programs and supports that address the challenges of adjusting to cultural expectations and language barriers are needed.
- Outreach and social connections are important to help senior immigrants increase their awareness of programs and supports available to them and gain an understanding of Canadian values.
- Francophone immigrants living in York Region face a unique challenge of not being able to access services in one of Canada's official languages. French language school boards and other community supports play an important role in supporting Francophone immigrant integration.

During consultations for the Strategy, it was also confirmed that there continues to be a need to build awareness and knowledge about services and programs available in York Region. The Community Portraits research study is one tool that facilitates the capacity building process and informs the development of programs and services to more effectively respond to the needs of these four groups.

The current status of the other initial actions identified in the Strategy

Regional staff have also been working with the Community Partnership Council to develop other initial actions identified in the Strategy. The current status of these actions is listed in Table 1.

Table 1
Current Status of Initial Actions

Initial Actions	Description	Status
Enhancing and marketing the York Region Immigration Portal	Maximizing the use of York Region Immigration Portal to provide current and relevant information to newcomers and enable information sharing among the organizations that support them.	A funding application was approved in January 2012 by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. \$19,100 was approved to expand content and the use of the portal.
Internationally Educated Professionals Conference	A one-day conference that connects governments, professional associations, employers and newcomers as well as newcomer entrepreneurs to network and learn about the Canadian workplace. Conference will take place in early Fall, 2012, if funding is secured.	The Steering Committee has been established. Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities have agreed to be partial funders pending final internal approval. This amounts to approximately \$110,000. Corporate sponsors are being sought for remainder of funding in collaboration with the Region's Economic Strategy Branch and Community Partnership Council.

Initial Actions	Description	Status
Central Local Health Integration Network Research Project	The Region received approximately \$300,000 to conduct research in partnership with Social Enterprise for Canada. Research into the multilingual language barriers in accessing health care is currently in progress.	Collaborating with Public Health staff and external stakeholders to conduct research. Consultations are being conducted in first quarter of 2012. Final report to Central LHIN by March 31, 2012.
Creation of Funders Table	The funders table will be formed in coordination with the existing York Region Funders' Alliance to strategically identify and guide community investments and resource allocations to maximize the use of existing funding dollars available for services and programs that support newcomers.	This will be explored more in detail commencing the second quarter of 2012.
Municipal Diversity Reference Group	This Group will provide a forum for municipalities to collaboratively plan, discuss common needs, and identify possible tools for other municipalities and best practices.	Currently under development. This will be established in the third quarter of 2012.
Community Engagement	The community engagement will expand to include organizations not on the CPC, ethno specific service providers and faith groups.	Community engagement is being implemented in three phases with specific goals and timelines for each phase.

Link to key Council-approved plans

The Strategy is well aligned with the Region's strategic direction

The Strategy aligns with York Region's strategic direction and priorities included in *Vision 2051*, and the *From Visions to Results: 2011-2015 Strategic Plan*, specifically in the priority areas of "Improve Social and Health Supports" and "Increase the Economic Vitality of the Region".

The Strategy is also consistent with goals of the Community and Health Services Department's *Multi-Year Plan*, and helps to foster social inclusion and economic opportunities by addressing the needs of a growing and diverse community. It is also

strongly aligned with the Human Services Planning Board of York Region's *Making Ends Meet in York Region* initiative. For example, both initiatives share common priorities related to workforce development and financial stability.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The federal government will continue to provide the Local Immigration Partnership initiative 100 per cent funding for two staff and program delivery up to \$280,000 for the fiscal year beginning April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013. The Region continues to support the Local Immigration Partnership initiative within the existing operating budget. These supports include program administration, communications and other assistance to Regional departments as they implement actions for the Strategy and other Regional initiatives that foster social inclusion and economic opportunities for a growing and diverse community.

Through funding available from outside the Local Immigration Partnership Initiative, the Region has secured approximately \$430,000 of additional 100 per cent funding from the federal and provincial governments. The Region will continue to advocate for additional funding for the actions developed through the Strategy and to support enhanced service delivery of settlement supports in York Region that may have been impacted by the federal funding cuts.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipalities continue to play a critical role in the implementation of the Strategy. The early successes of the Strategy will help service providers in the local municipalities build capacity, assist newcomers to access services that support integration, and help create welcoming and inclusive communities.

Currently, the Towns of Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill and City of Vaughan participate on the Community Partnership Council. The other local municipalities will be engaged to identify collective and individual actions that contribute to the priorities of the Strategy.

7. CONCLUSION

Successful integration of newcomers is vital to creating vibrant communities in York Region. With the help of Community Partnership Council, York Region is continuing to take the lead in implementing the Strategy and developing initial actions that will ensure the Strategy is a success.

This success is dependent on the endorsement and collaboration of the broader community. The Community Partnership Council and Regional staff continue to engage the community at large with the aim to provide a framework for stakeholders to take collective action towards creating welcoming and inclusive communities.

For more information on this report, please contact Lisa Gonsalves, Acting Managing Director, Strategic Service Integration and Policy at Ext. 2090.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause was included in the agenda for the March 7, 2012 Committee meeting.)

COMMUNITY PORTRAITS:

Immigrants Living in York Region

Women • Youth • Seniors • Francophones



DRAFT
March 2012

Acknowledgements

Community Portraits: Immigrants Living in York Region – Women, Youth, Seniors, and Francophones, was developed under the leadership of The Regional Municipality of York and with the support of the Community Partnership Council.

We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the many community stakeholders from across York Region who took part in the consultations for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*. The views and opinions of these community stakeholders, newcomers, long-term residents, community leaders, representatives of various organizations, local municipalities, employer networks and planning tables were incorporated into *Community Portraits*.

Pinpoint Research and Consulting Services Inc. played a key role in developing the research for *Community Portraits*.

Community Portraits is part of the work being done through the Local Immigration Partnership initiative. This initiative is funded by the Government of Canada through Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

For more information about *Community Portraits: Immigrants Living in York Region – Women, Youth, Seniors, and Francophones* or the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* contact:

The Regional Municipality of York Community and Health Services Department
Strategic Service Integration Policy Branch
17250 Yonge Street, 2nd Floor
Newmarket, Ontario L3Y 6Z1

Attention: Program Manager, Local Immigration Partnership initiative
Phone: 1-877-464-9675 Ext. 2087
Email: yrimmigrationpartnership@york.ca
Website: www.yorkwelcome.ca

Organizations wishing to cite any portions of *Community Portraits* are requested to use the following citation when referring to this document:

The Regional Municipality of York. (2012). *Community Portraits: Immigrants Living in York Region – Women, Youth, Seniors, and Francophones*. Newmarket, Ontario.

INTRODUCTION

It is often said that Canada is a nation of immigrants; this statement is as true for The Regional Municipality of York as it is for the country. It is estimated that by 2031, 55 per cent of the Region's population will be immigrants and 62 per cent will be visible minorities. York Region's immigrant population is fundamental to the development of our vibrant and diverse communities.

To assist in the creation of welcoming and inclusive communities that promote the successful integration of all immigrants, a better understanding of the characteristics, strengths and needs of both established and recent immigrants is essential. Previous reports such as *Community Snapshots: Recent Immigrants Living in York Region (2006)*, *Vision 2051 (draft)*, the *Community and Health Services Department Multi-Year Plan (2010)*, and *Changing Landscapes: Recent Immigrants Living in York Region (2011)*, are evidence of York Regional Council's support and leadership in building awareness of the needs of our immigrant population. Another initiative that demonstrates this leadership is the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* endorsed by Regional Council in September, 2011.

The *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* was developed through the Local Immigration Partnership initiative and in collaboration with the Community Partnership Council, a multi-stakeholder group. The Strategy sets a long-term vision for the well-being of newcomers living in York Region. Priorities look at all aspects of Canadian life including economic, social, cultural and political/civic integration and how to strengthen our community's ability to be welcoming and inclusive. *Community Portraits: Immigrants Living in York Region - Women, Youth, Seniors and Francophones (Community Portraits)* is an initial action from the Strategy which helps support these priorities.

Federal government settlement programs have traditionally been geared toward the principal applicant who lands in Canada. Principal applicants tend to be working age men. However, they are also accompanied by spouses, parents and children who need support integrating into the community. In 2006, the federal government re-examined settlement supports in Ontario and found that "increasing diversity of newcomers to Canada requires a wider range of services, new approaches and better coordination to result in positive outcomes for individuals and their families.... Newcomer services must provide a continuum of supports, and be responsive to the needs of specific client groups such as seniors, women and youth. Newcomers need to become fluent in the language and customs of their communities, and Ontario's communities need to become more responsive in welcoming and engaging newcomers from every part of the world." (Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada's Strategic Plan for Settlement and Language Training, 2006).

Community Portraits examines the social and economic characteristics of immigrant women, youth, seniors and Francophones living in York Region. These four groups have been identified by the federal government as priority groups for the unique challenges they face and opportunities they bring to our Region.



***Community Portraits* blends experiences and recommendations of nearly 2,000 consultation participants with current literature and data**

This report incorporates the results of the consultations undertaken for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*. These consultations included nearly 2,000 stakeholders, newcomers, long-term residents, local municipalities, community leaders, service agencies, employer networks and organizations from across York Region. The results from these discussions are combined with a current literature review and socio-demographic data to create *Community Portraits*.

Community Portraits incorporates the most recent data available on immigrants living in York Region including 2010 landing data and 2031 population forecasts using the 2006 Census. In February 2012, Statistics Canada released the first data from the 2011 Census. This data shows that in 2011 York Region's population was 1,032,524, an increase of 16 per cent since 2006. Immigration data was not included in this release. As this type of data becomes available it will be important to monitor the trends between the two Census periods.

According to Statistics Canada, since 2001, immigration has been a major factor in population growth across Canada. It is estimated that by 2031, immigration could account for more than 80 per cent of Canada's population growth, compared to approximately 67 per cent in 2011. A similar trend will happen in York Region. It is estimated that 55 per cent of York Region residents will be immigrants and 62 per cent will be visible minorities by 2031 (Source: The Regional Municipality of York, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, Long Range Planning Branch Population Estimates and Projections).

Key Findings from Community Portraits

- Although recent immigrant women are often highly educated, it is quite common that they take on the caregiver role when moving to Canada. Programs aimed at connecting immigrant women with the community and workforce will assist them to reach their full potential.
- Like most Canadian young people, recent immigrant youth work to balance school and social pressures such as fitting in with their peers. To support their unique needs, additional programs and supports that address the challenges of adjusting to cultural expectations and language barriers are needed.
- Outreach and social connections are important to help senior immigrants increase their awareness of programs and supports available to them and gain an understanding of Canadian values.
- Francophone immigrants living in York Region face a unique challenge of not being able to access services in one of Canada's official languages. French language school boards and other community supports play an important role in supporting Francophone immigrant integration.



IMMIGRANT WOMEN LIVING IN YORK REGION

“Looking at integration outcomes from the perspective of immigrant women’s familial roles highlights the need to focus on the family unit....to fully understand and properly address issues in relation to immigrant women.”

~ Integration Outcome for Immigrant Women in Canada: A Review of the Literature 2000 – 2007.

Facts:

- The number of women living in York Region is expected to increase from 455,210 in 2006 to 544,229 in 2011. This number is projected to grow to 755,207 by 2031. (Sources: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census and The Regional Municipality of York, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, Long Range Planning Branch Population Estimates and Projections).
- According to the 2006 Census, women made up 52 per cent of the York Region total population aged 15 years and over. Similarly, immigrant women, regardless of their period of immigration, made up 52 per cent of the total immigrant population aged 15 and over in York Region.
- In 2008, of the 128,629 immigrant women who landed in Canada, 5,728 landed in York Region (Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Facts and Figures, 2008). They represent approximately 50 per cent of all landed immigrants, but traditionally are the family member of the principal applicant.
- More than half of the immigrant women aged 15 and over who lived in York Region in 2006 arrived prior to 1991, while 11 per cent were recent immigrant women who came between 2001 and 2006.
- The majority of recent immigrant women aged 15 and over were between the ages of 25 and 54 (66 per cent).
- While there were similar proportions of recent immigrants, male and female, two thirds (66 per cent) of the recent immigrants from the Philippines were women. The Philippines is one of the largest source countries for temporary foreign workers to Canada. (Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Facts and Figures 2008). The high percentage of Filipino women may be an indicator of this trend.
- In 2006, 25 per cent of recent immigrant women had Canadian citizenship, while 92 per cent of immigrant women who arrived in Canada prior to 1991 had Canadian citizenship.



Immigrant Women Aged 15 and over in York Region by Period of Immigration, 2006

Before 1991	103,780	55%
1991 – 1995	34,275	18%
1996 – 2000	29,030	16%
2001 – 2006	20,745	11%
Total	187,830	100%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulation.

- The most common birth places of recent immigrant women were:
 - » China (20 per cent)
 - » Philippines (six per cent)
 - » United Kingdom (one per cent)
 - » India (10 per cent)
 - » United States (one per cent)
- The most common visible minority group of recent immigrant women was Chinese, representing 31 per cent of all recent immigrant women who lived in York Region in 2006. The other top visible minority groups were South Asian (28 per cent), West Asian (12 per cent), Korean (nine per cent), and Filipino (eight per cent).

Citizenship and Immigration Canada identified recent immigrant women as being a priority immigrant group with specific needs such as:

- **Access to services to decrease vulnerability**
- **Access to affordable childcare**

~ Citizenship and Immigration Canada Strategic Plan for Settlement and Language Training, 2006.

Recent immigrant women in York Region face unique challenges as they find themselves in new roles

Recent immigrant women play an important role in successful family integration and in our economy. They arrive in Canada highly educated and experienced, eager to obtain employment and support their families economically. Many recent immigrant women came from countries where they were expected and accustomed to participating in the workforce. Child care is also affordable in their countries of origin, often being provided by domestic help or extended family.

In addition to the same challenges faced by recent immigrant men upon immigrating to Canada (e.g., accessing employment, upgrading credentials, learning an official language, learning Canadian values and norms), women find they are expected to bear most of the responsibility of being the primary caregivers to their children and/or elderly parents. This puts enormous pressure on recent immigrant women who must adjust to this role, and can impact their ability to become connected to their communities or find employment that matches their skills and education. It becomes particularly challenging if they are not fluent in one of Canada's official languages.

Consultations for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* highlighted that recent immigrant women find it hard to navigate the mismatch in their role in Canada as compared to their home countries. This is particularly challenging when cultural norms from other countries may not align with Canadian norms. Language and lack of connections to community and employment all contribute to feelings of isolation, stress, and poor emotional and health well-being. Recent immigrant women participants felt the lack of affordable child care or not being able to secure appropriate employment presented a barrier to their ability to integrate both socially and economically. In addition, not having extended family supports contributed to their feelings of isolation.

Programs and services meant to facilitate settlement will assist recent immigrant women to integrate into their community

Consultations for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* found that in the Region the largest gap in program supports was for immigrant women. Focus group participants identified the need for the following program improvements:

- Transition to the paid workforce after working in the home or for women who are not supported to work outside the home by their families
- Programs that meet women's health needs such as prenatal care and giving birth in a new country
- Assistance for navigating the school system for their children
- Awareness of housing choices and supports for victims of family violence
- Awareness for spouses to help with the adjustment to Canada.

Recent immigrant women have specific needs that may not be met by existing programs. Some recent immigrant women may not be aware of existing programs meant to facilitate integration because they do not speak the language, or they do not know where to seek help and support. Lack of access to affordable child care may also inhibit immigrant women's ability to attend courses and training. As a result, recent immigrant women face challenges finding programs which address their needs to transition to the paid workforce, to get their credentials recognized, and to navigate the health care and education systems.



“Immigrant women are one of the most vulnerable people in the community. There should be more door to door outreach initiatives for stay at home moms and mono parental families led by women.”

~ Consultations for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*.

Domestic violence further isolates recent immigrant women

While only a few service provider focus group participants, for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*, raised the issues of domestic violence, it was seen as an important issue for recent immigrant women settling in York Region. These participants felt that sometimes the violence was a reaction to the stresses caused by: trying to adapt to a new environment, financial pressures, changing roles in the household and lack of social support. Domestic violence may further isolate women and children.

~ Consultations for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*, 2011.

The ability to communicate in English is fundamental to social connectedness and building support networks

Recent immigrant women in York Region were more likely than recent immigrant men to lack knowledge of an official language (16 per cent vs. 12 per cent). As recent immigrant women were not typically the principal applicants in the immigration process, they were not assessed for language fluency. The lack of language proficiency has serious impacts on the lives of immigrant women in the areas of work, education, health, and well-being, and is a loss to society in terms of human and financial capital (Kilbride et. al., 2008:47).

“Language proficiency is also important for the mental health and well-being of the women themselves” (Kilbride et. al., 2008:47). According to a study by Man (2004), lack of language ability exacerbated immigrant women’s feelings of isolation and depression.”

When English-language proficiency is limited, recent immigrant women cannot fully access and benefit from the available services and resources to address their families’ needs. For instance, since women are often caregivers to any family members who are ill, it is important that they learn English in order to deal with medical professionals effectively. It is also essential that they speak English to deal with financial institutions and engaging in their children’s education.

“Ideally, classes should be within walking distance of women’s homes, using local schools, public libraries, the highrises that newcomers live in that serve large numbers in the surrounding neighbourhood, and community.”

~ Kilbride et. al., 2008:40.



Recent immigrant women participants in the consultations for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* indicated that they need more flexibility in course schedules; for example, weekend classes for those who worked, or daytime classes so that mothers could be with their children after school. Recent immigrant women also need both occupation specific language training to obtain employment and practical English language training to assist them in dealing with institutions such as education and health care.

In 2011, Citizenship and Immigration Canada began funding the Women, Youth and Seniors Core Services programs in York Region. Currently, the program includes women support groups that focus on issues such as self-esteem, stress management, communication skills and physical and emotional wellness.

Catholic Community Services of York Region also offers a program called “Bridge Group for Women.” This program helps women from diverse communities build self-esteem, increase assertiveness, build stronger relationships, reduce isolation and cope constructively with transitioning to living in Canada.

Facts:

- While English was spoken most often at home in York Region in 2006 equally by recent immigrant women (24 per cent) and men (23 per cent), employed recent immigrant women aged 15 and over (14 per cent) were slightly more likely to only speak a non-official language at work than their male counterparts (12 per cent).
- In 2006, the top five non-official languages spoken most often at home by recent immigrant women living in York Region were:
 - » Chinese (27 per cent)
 - » Persian (Farsi) (11 per cent)
 - » Tamil (five per cent)
 - » Russian (15 per cent)
 - » Korean (eight per cent)

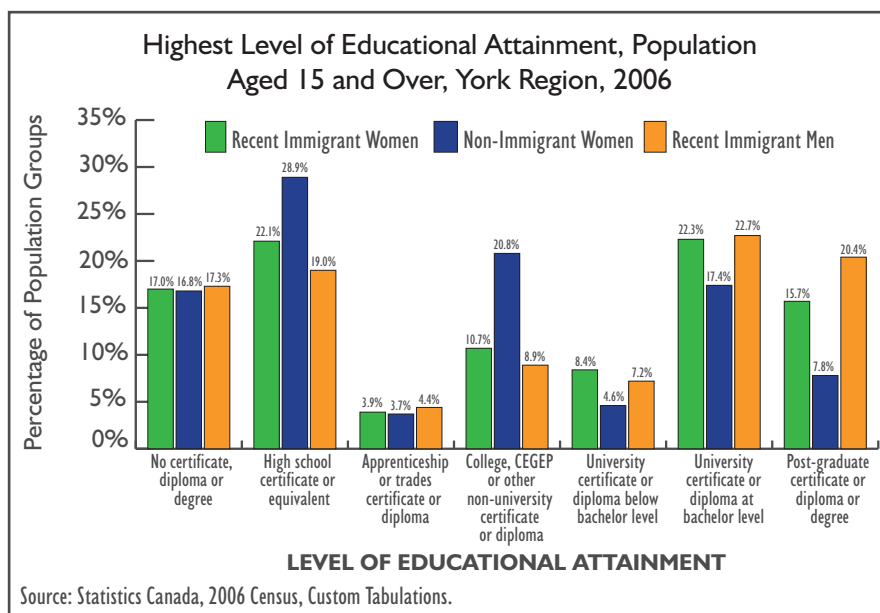
Finding jobs that match their skills and education allows recent immigrant women to integrate economically while supporting their families

According to the Statistics Canada 2006 Census, recent immigrant women living in York Region are highly educated and experienced, yet have the highest unemployment rate and earn the lowest incomes among women living in York Region.

York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy focus group participants suggested that settlement and employment services need to meet the requirements of the educated recent immigrant women population. It is also important that employers are able to match the skills, training, and knowledge of recent immigrants with suitable employment. A focus should be placed on academic credential assessment services and appropriate bridging/upgrading opportunities for the many recent immigrants in York Region with degrees obtained outside of Canada. This is true for both recent immigrant men and women living in York Region.

Facts:

- In 2006, 38 per cent of recent immigrant women aged 15 and over had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 43 per cent of recent immigrant men.
- In 2006, 16 per cent of recent immigrant women had a post-graduate certificate, diploma or degree.
- In York Region, the most common field of study for recent immigrant women, aged 25 to 64, with post-secondary qualifications, was business, management and public administration.



Finding employment is a greater challenge for recent immigrant women

In 2006, the unemployment rate for recent immigrant women was 10.9 per cent, compared to the overall unemployment rate in York Region of 5.4 per cent. The labour force participation rate for recent immigrant women is considerably lower than that of recent immigrant men and Canadian-born women. Also, recent immigrant women are unevenly distributed across skill levels.

Recent immigrant women with a university degree were the least likely to be working in jobs commensurate with their education, skills and experience as compared to recent immigrant men and Canadian-born women. In 2005, 65 per cent of recent immigrant women with a university degree were working in jobs that require less than a university degree.



“Immigrant women are heavily represented in clerical, sales or service positions, and manufacturing; and underrepresented in professional occupations. Recent immigrant women were also paid 45 per cent less than Canadian born women of similar ages and educational attainment, and 30 per cent less than their male counterparts.”

~VanderPlaat, 2007:28.

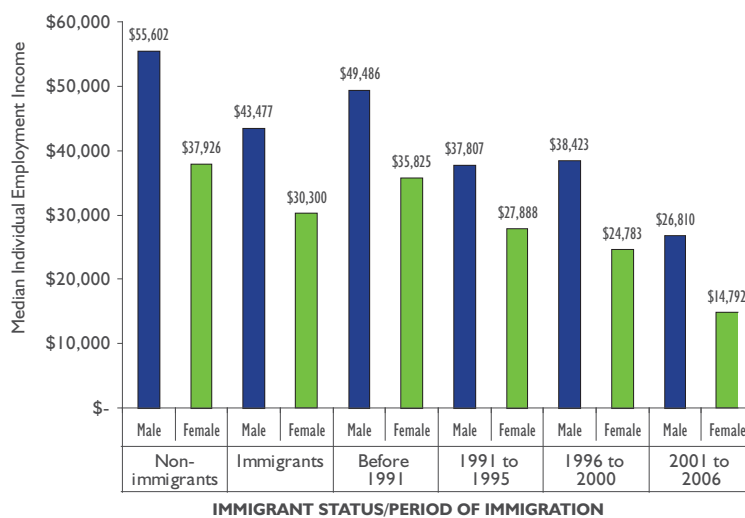
Recent immigrant women were over three times more likely than non-immigrant women (32 per cent vs. nine per cent) to have been living below the low income before tax cut-off and slightly less likely than recent immigrant males (34 per cent).

Focus group participants from the consultations for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*, said that better access to child care supports would allow recent immigrant women to utilize services, go back to school to get their credentials recognized, and provide them the opportunity to look for paid work during business hours. All of these opportunities would contribute to a women’s sense of worth and a more successful integration process.

Facts:

- Recent immigrant women who lived in York Region had a median income of \$14,792 in 2005, the lowest of all population groups aged 25 to 64.
- As length of time in Canada increases, immigrant women, on average, were more likely to have earned higher incomes; however, their median income was still lower than that of immigrant men (\$30,300 vs. \$43,477).
- In 2005, 32 per cent of recent immigrant women of all ages were living below the low income before tax cut-off.
- According to the 2006 Census data, recent immigrant women aged 25 to 64 with a bachelor's degree earned significantly less than their male counterparts (\$17,320 vs. \$31,894).

Median Individual Employment Income by Gender, Immigrant Status and Period of Immigration, Population Aged 25 to 64, York Region, 2005



Note: The year 2005 is the reference period for income reported in 2006 Census. Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulations.

Recent immigrant women contribute to the economy by providing family support, however, finding commensurate employment is a challenge

Recent immigrant women in York Region were most likely to be overrepresented in sales and service occupations (34 per cent), compared to 22 per cent for the total population aged 15 and over. The same is true for manufacturing occupations (nine per cent vs. five per cent).

Recent immigrant women were also less likely to be working in management occupations (seven per cent vs. 14 per cent for total population), trades, transport and equipment operation (two per cent vs. 11 per cent for total population), and natural and applied sciences (six per cent vs. nine per cent for total population).

Facts:

- According to the 2006 Census, 57 per cent of recent immigrant women aged 15 and over were participating in the labour force while 71 per cent of Canadian-born women were participating in the labour force.
- According to the 2006 Census, 18 per cent of recent immigrant females worked full-time full year in 2005, nearly half as many as recent immigrant males (32 per cent) and Canadian-born women (36 per cent).
- Recent immigrant women aged 25 to 64 (21 per cent) used public transit as a mode of transportation to work at a rate that was double the rate for recent immigrant men (11 per cent) and nearly three times the rate of non-immigrant women (eight per cent).

IMMIGRANT YOUTH LIVING IN YORK REGION

“[I]mmigrant children may face unique settlement problems. Beyond the ‘regular’ difficulties that most children face, such as peer pressure, the tribulations of the teen years and academic concerns, many immigrant youth must also adjust to a new culture and language. Although it is commonly believed that children can acclimatize to a new environment better than adults, witnesses appearing before the [Standing] Committee [on Citizenship and Immigration] indicated that more needs to be done to foster the development of young newcomers and that programs specifically geared to their needs should be augmented.”

~ House of Commons, 2003:16-17.

Facts:

- The number of youth (aged 15 to 24) living in York Region is expected to increase from 126,475 in 2006 to 151,565 in 2011. The number is projected to grow to 160,776 by 2031. (Sources: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census and The Regional Municipality of York, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, Long Range Planning Branch Population Estimates and Projections).
- Of the 126,475 youth in York Region in 2006, 35,830 were immigrant youth, accounting for 28 per cent of all youth in York Region.
- The majority of the immigrant youth population came to Canada between 1991 and 2001. Recent immigrant youth (those who immigrated between 2001 and 2006) accounted for 21 per cent of all immigrant youth.
- In 2008, 37,425 immigrant youth landed in Canada and 1,670 landed in York Region. (Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Facts and Figures, 2008).
- The most common visible minority groups of recent immigrant youth in York Region in 2006 were South Asian (26 per cent), Chinese (25 per cent), West Asian (15 per cent) and Korean (13 per cent).
- The most common places of birth of immigrant youth in York Region were:
 - » Eastern Asia (33 per cent)
 - » West Central Asia and the Middle East (18 per cent)
 - » Southern Asia (13 per cent)
 - » Eastern Europe (13 per cent)
 - » South East Asia (five per cent)

Immigrant Youth in York Region by Period of Immigration, 2006		
Before 1991	6,845	19%
1991 – 1995	10,840	30%
1996 – 2000	10,735	30%
2001 – 2006	7,410	21%
Total	35,830	100%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulation.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada identified recent immigrant youth as being a priority immigrant group with specific needs such as:

- Youth-orientated settlement services
- After school programming
- Participation in social, cultural and recreational activities with their Canadian peers
- Understanding of the educational system

~ Citizenship and Immigration Canada Strategic Plan for Settlement and Language Training, 2006.

Immigrant youth find themselves balancing parental expectations with the need to fit in with their peers

According to focus group participants for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*, youth adapt to Canadian culture more quickly through the school system by meeting new people and learning different cultural norms. On the other hand, parents do not have the same opportunities to adjust to cultural norms, especially if they have not been able to find work. Newcomer focus group participants said tensions emerge based on the difference between how things are done in Canada and how they were done in their country of origin. Recent immigrant youth can also find it hard to balance both cultures. Service providers participating in the focus groups said more family supports are needed, particularly for issues of intergenerational conflict.

“Youth and their parents experience shifts in their respective roles within the family and especially with the outside world. In the face of barriers such as language and unfamiliarity with mainstream institutions, youth often find themselves in the position of intermediary, translating, interpreting and negotiating for or on behalf of their parents. This creates awkwardness for the youth and places an unwarranted burden on them. Parents on the other hand find their power, authority and ability to control their youth somewhat compromised. Needless to say, this experience of shifting roles places both parents and youth at risk with profound implications for family dynamics.”

~ Desai, S. & Subramanian, S., 2000:6.



Safe and inclusive learning environments are important for supporting immigrant youth in York Region

Ontario's *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* recognizes the need for school boards to work with partners to create the inclusive environment needed for student success. "In an increasingly diverse Ontario, that means ensuring that all students are engaged, included, and respected, and that they are themselves reflected in their learning environment." (Source: Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009).

According to focus group participants for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* youth who feel welcome in their schools find they meet new people, learn different cultural norms, and ultimately adapt to Canadian culture more quickly.

In 2011, nine per cent of high school students enrolled in the York Region District School Board and four per cent of high school students in the York Catholic District School Board were recent immigrants (arrived between 2006 and 2011). The majority were in English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Literacy Development (ELD) programs. (Sources: York Region District School Board and York Catholic District School Board, December 2011).



School programs help immigrant youth integrate and feel welcome

Programs that contribute to feeling safe and accepted help immigrant youth integrate more fully into society. In York Region, programs such as Youth Immigrant Leadership Programs, the NOW Program, Welcome to Canada orientations for recent immigrant youth, or peer programs such as homework clubs, 'buddy' and mentorships have come a long way to help immigrants integrate and feel welcome in their new school environments.

Extracurricular activities help build social connections

Community consultation for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* found immigrants had difficulties accessing extracurricular activities. Some recent immigrant youth participants in the York Region focus groups said they took part in after school sports, but such programs are not widely available and are frequently too expensive. While there are many opportunities at school to make friends, many youth identified challenges breaking into social circles. However, it was found that through extracurricular activities, new relationships are formed and fostered.

The concept of a school as a community hub sees schools as deeply connected to the community doing more than just providing students with the academic basics or offering settlement services to immigrants or even opening their doors to community programs. By combining all these objectives, schools build welcoming and inclusive communities providing families who live there social and emotional support in addition to literacy and numeracy skills.

~ Wayland & Goldberg (2010).

While some service provider participants identified a number of immigrant-specific youth groups, most of the recent immigrant youth participants were not aware of them. These activity groups need to be made accessible to all York Region youth. The *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* identified the need for after school programs, peer support groups and safe “hang out” spots.

In York Region, the Immigrant Youth Centre has special programs targeting youth aged 13 to 24. From specially targeted Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) classes for immigrant youth to sports and leadership programs, this centre is a place that is comfortable for immigrant youth and helps them feel more included in their new environment. The Immigrant Youth Centre is located in Markham.

Recreational programs provide all youth with a sense of belonging and strengthen community relations

A study conducted by the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) on an *Inclusive Recreation Model for Immigrant and Refugee Youth (2005)* highlights how recreational programs can provide immigrant youth with a sense of belonging and identity. These programs can be an outlet for reducing stress and tension, and strengthen community group relations by “bridging the cultural divide”. In addition to the obvious benefits such as improved physical activity, participating in team sports can also provide constructive activities for youth, help improve their communication skills and help newcomers learn soft skills such as working with others in team settings.

“The best way [for youth] is to either provide some kind of training/enhancement/skill building that encourages socialization, located in areas where youth already gather, i.e., schools. Often sports and recreation or arts can be a catalyst for supporting youth and aiding their transition into higher education and employment.”

~ Consultation for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*.

Facts:

- There was very little difference in school attendance between immigrant and Canadian-born youth: 79 per cent of immigrant youth aged 15 to 24 years attended school (either full-time or part-time) in the nine months before the 2006 Census was conducted vs. 77 per cent of their Canadian-born counterparts.
- Among immigrant youth aged 15 to 24 years, 12 per cent had a university certificate, diploma or degree at bachelor’s level or above; compared to 9 per cent for Canadian-born youth.
- Among youth aged 15 to 24 years with a university certificate, diploma or degree at a bachelor’s level or above, 15 per cent of immigrants had post-graduate educational attainment (such as university certificate or degree above bachelor’s level and advanced degrees), while 18 per cent of non-immigrants did.
- Recent immigrant youth aged 20 to 24 had the lowest rate of school attendance (59 per cent), among all other youth groups.

Language is a significant barrier to making friends, finding employment and ‘fitting in’

The ages between 15 and 24 are a critical phase in a young person’s life. It is the time they develop their identity, figure out who they are and begin to consider what their future may be. “It is a stage when all adolescents become self-conscious about how they look, how they sound and how they come across, especially to their peers. Fitting in is of critical importance to youth.” (Source: Desai, S. & Subramanian, S., 2000:23).

Recent immigrant youth had the highest proportion (four per cent) of all youth groups in York Region who had no knowledge of English or French. For immigrant youth who lived in Canada for five to 10 years, only one per cent had no knowledge of English or French.

Language is a key barrier for all immigrants. For immigrant youth, it affects their ability to make friends and keep up at school. Language does not only refer to understanding and vocabulary, for youth it is also about their ability to use slang appropriately (Consultation for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*). Youth in the York Region focus groups felt that language classes were too formal and they wanted a chance to learn informal English including common slang.

Youth participants also said that it was easier to immigrate at a younger age, for example, at the elementary school level. The younger the newcomer is, the easier it is for them to learn English and to meet people.

“I understand the joke, but not always when to laugh.”

~ Recent immigrant youth focus group participant for the *York Region Immigrant Settlement Strategy*.



Additional language programs are needed for older immigrant youth to help build relationships and feel connected to their community

Supports for youth aged 15 to 19 are more available now than they were in the past. However, a gap still remains for youth aged 20 to 24, especially if they are not in high school or post-secondary institutions. Immigrant youth who are not attached to educational institutions have more difficulty learning English and fitting in as they are not able to access language and mentoring programs available through schools.

Immigrant youth participants indicated that (older) adults usually enrolled in language classes and that they wanted the class environment to be more relatable, so they could make friends and feel connected.

“Youth who immigrate to Canada around the age of 15 are more likely to graduate from high school without learning how to speak English effectively.”

~ Consultation for the *York Region Immigrant Settlement Strategy*.

Facts:

- Almost all immigrant youth (99 per cent) in York Region reported having knowledge of an official language (90 per cent indicated English). These values were the same regardless of whether the immigrant youth was between the ages of 15 and 19 or 20 and 24.
- While almost all immigrant youth reported knowledge of English, only 41 per cent reported English as the language most often spoken at home. The most common non-official languages used at home among immigrant youth were:
 - » Chinese (41 per cent)
 - » Russian (12 per cent)
 - » Persian (Farsi) (10 per cent)



A stable family income allows youth to participate in social activities, and strengthens their overall connectedness to peers and community

In total, 26 per cent of all immigrant youth who were living in York Region in 2005 were living below low income before tax cut-off (LICO-BT). The situation facing recent immigrant youth is even more alarming as 41 per cent of them were living below LICO-BT. A critical component of being socially integrated is the connectedness one feels to their community and their peers. “A stable family income improves the likelihood of social integration. Studies indicate that socio-economic status has an impact on the healthy emotional and social development of children and adolescents. The high incidence of youth living below Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) adds to the risk that youth will have challenges at school and integrating into the community.” (Source: Beiser, Shik, & Curyk, 1999).

Immigrant youth need help and support getting their ‘first job’ experience

As a result of Canada’s highly selective immigration system, immigrant parents tend to be highly educated. While this may inspire immigrant youth to achieve higher levels of education, it doesn’t necessarily translate into better employment.

There are many barriers for immigrant youth, such as transportation to get to a job interview, language, and cultural differences. Immigrant youth need to be made more aware of existing programs and services that counsel them through resume writing and interview skills.



Facts:

- In 2006, almost all youth aged 15 to 24 (96 per cent immigrants vs. 98 per cent non-immigrants) in York Region lived with a family.
- In 2006, the unemployment rate for all youth aged 15 to 24 years who lived in York Region was 13.9 per cent. Immigrant youth had higher unemployment rates than non-immigrant youth (15.4 per cent vs. 13.4 per cent), compared to the overall rate of 5.4 per cent for the total population aged 15 and over.
- Immigrant youth were less likely to be living below LICO-BT the longer they lived in Canada. For example, 41 per cent of recent immigrant youth living in York Region in 2005 lived below LICO-BT, compared to 24 per cent of immigrant youth who came to Canada between 1991 and 1995, and 12 per cent of those who arrived before 1991.



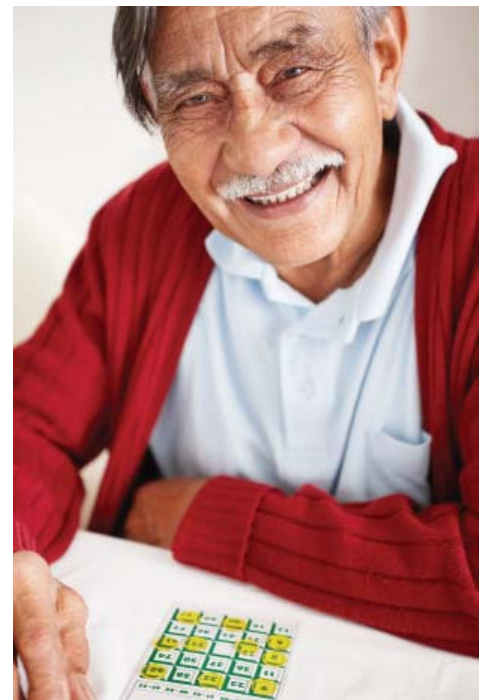
IMMIGRANT SENIORS LIVING IN YORK REGION

Recent immigrant seniors are some of the most vulnerable and hardest to reach people in the community....Targeted culturally sensitive services in their first language are crucial as recent immigrant seniors are often the least likely age group to speak English, know the least about programs that are available to them and find challenges accessing services.

~ Consultation for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*.

Facts:

- The number of seniors (aged 65 years and over) living in York Region is expected to increase from 91,920 in 2006 to 121,965 in 2011. The senior population is projected to grow to 311,257 by 2031. (Sources: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census and The Regional Municipality of York, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, Long Range Planning Branch Population Estimates and Projections).
- In 2008, of the 6,956 immigrant seniors who landed in Canada, 751 landed in York Region. (Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Facts and Figures, 2008).
- Most immigrant seniors living in York Region have been sponsored by family members already living in Canada. Between 2001 and 2010, 83 per cent of immigrant seniors, a higher percentage than any other age group, came to Canada through the Family Class immigration category. (Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Facts and Figures, 2010).
- The immigrant senior population is relatively well established. Approximately 60,270 immigrant seniors lived in York Region in 2006, while 3,265 were recent immigrant seniors.
- In 2006, 87 per cent of all immigrant seniors in York Region had Canadian citizenship, which was slightly higher than the proportion (83 per cent) among all immigrants who lived in York Region.
- The most common ethnic origin groups of immigrant seniors were:
 - » Italian (24 per cent)
 - » Chinese (22 per cent)
 - » East Indian (seven per cent)
 - » German (five per cent)



Immigrant Seniors by Period of Immigration, York Region, 2006

Before 1991	46,255	77%
1991 – 1995	6,950	12%
1996 – 2000	3,800	6%
2001 – 2006	3,265	5%
Total	60,270	100%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulation.

- In 2006, the most common visible minority groups of recent immigrant seniors in York Region were Chinese (50 per cent), South Asian (21 per cent), West Asian (12 per cent) and Filipino (six per cent).
- The most common places of birth for immigrant seniors and recent immigrant seniors were:

Immigrant Seniors	Recent Immigrant Seniors
Italy (24 per cent)	China (33 per cent)
China (18 per cent)	India (nine per cent)
United Kingdom (nine per cent)	Philippines (four per cent)
India (five per cent)	Italy (two per cent)
Philippines (two per cent)	United Kingdom (one per cent)

Citizenship and Immigration Canada identified recent immigrant seniors as being a priority immigrant group with specific needs such as:

- **Employment opportunities**
- **Interpreters to assist them during key life activities such as visiting a doctor**

~ Citizenship and Immigration Canada Strategic Plan for Settlement and Language Training, 2006.

Recent immigrant seniors in York Region face many challenges when moving to Canada

While some recent immigrant seniors have an active part in choosing to come to Canada, more often they are sponsored to come to live with their families that have already moved to Canada. This sponsorship arrangement adds a level of dependency for recent immigrant seniors.

Many changes occur when recent immigrant seniors come to live with their families. Recent immigrant seniors may have lived independently in their home countries and now are required to live in multigenerational households. In addition, many recent immigrant seniors lack knowledge of either of Canada's official languages, lack mobility, and are more at risk of possible health issues. For some, adjusting to a colder climate in Canada can also be particularly difficult, which further inhibits mobility and adds to feelings of isolation, loneliness and depression.

Through the consultations and literature review conducted for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*, recent immigrant seniors were identified as some of the most vulnerable and hardest to reach people in the community, as they often go unseen. They feel isolated, a burden on their families, lack financial and social independence, may be dealing with health issues and are adjusting to changing family roles in a new country. In focus group discussions, service providers identified targeted culturally sensitive services in recent immigrant seniors' first language as being crucial since they are often the least likely age group to speak English, know the least about programs that are available to them and find challenges getting there.

Supports that enhance language skills and mobility can help senior immigrants connect with their communities

Immigrant seniors were much less likely to speak English or French than other immigrants in York Region. The lack of official language ability can lead to isolation and decreases ones' ability to access services. As such, targeted language training or translation/interpretation services are needed for the immigrant seniors population in York Region.

Recognizing the importance of providing language training that reflects the unique needs of recent immigrant seniors, Citizenship and Immigration Canada began funding the Women, Youth and Seniors Core Services program in 2011. It is the only language program geared specifically to recent immigrant seniors in York Region. Programs include beginner level computer lessons and conversational English training.

“A need for fluency in English was identified by all seniors who were adamant that there would be no cure for their loneliness without English, and no way to fulfill their desire to be contributing members of Canadian society.”

~ Kilbride, 2010.

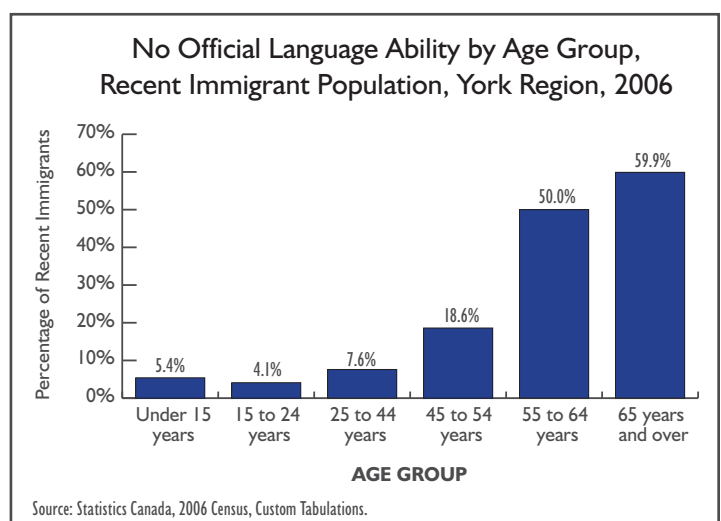
Restructuring settlement services to provide a first-language case manager and a first-language compendium of information were seen as very valuable by most seniors and family members. Other than successfully learning English, this was seen as the biggest single contributor to ending their isolation, loneliness, and depression.

~ Kilbride, 2010:2.

Facts:

- In 2006, 26 per cent of immigrant seniors who lived in York Region did not have knowledge of either of Canada's official languages. In comparison, eight per cent of immigrants of all ages had no knowledge of either of Canada's official languages.
- Of the recent immigrant senior population, 60 per cent had no knowledge of either of Canada's official languages.
- The following were the top non-official languages most often spoken at home by all immigrant seniors who lived in York Region in 2006:

- » Chinese (32 per cent)
- » Russian (four per cent)
- » Persian (Farsi) (three per cent)
- » Italian (30 per cent)
- » Punjabi (three per cent)



Outreach is a fundamental requirement in assisting immigrant seniors to access health information and services

While health is an important concern for all seniors, immigrant seniors face particular challenges around access to appropriate health care services. According to the senior focus group participants for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*, there is a need for more improved culturally appropriate access to health care, including access to family doctors who speak an immigrant's first language or interpreters to help overcome language barriers and also more culturally appropriate long-term care facilities.

Beyond primary health care challenges, focus group respondents suggested service providers should explore innovative methods to reach out to this largely invisible and difficult-to-reach population. Possible outreach venues identified included places of worship, ethno-cultural associations, ethnic shopping areas, ethnic media and health care providers' offices.

Although a broad range of programs and services for immigrant seniors exist in York Region, immigrant seniors say they are often unaware of the programs, cannot pay the cost, or have no way to get there. Immigrant seniors who participated in consultations for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* indicated that family responsibilities as well as their unfamiliarity with the public transit system limits their time for personal trips.

“Problems with seniors’ health were exacerbated by underlying mental health conditions and by a lack of timely access to first-language health providers and access to transportation to [doctor] appointment.”

~ Kilbride, 2010:01.

Family responsibilities can leave immigrant seniors with less time to build social networks

While living with family provides a support network, it can interfere with independence and lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness. The lack of privacy and additional responsibilities can interfere with an immigrant seniors' ability to entertain and maintain social relationships.

Focus group participants for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*, felt it was difficult to adapt to the changes in family roles since coming to Canada to live with their families. Immigrant senior men indicated they were more active in household duties such as cooking, cleaning, child care, and gardening than they were in their countries of origin.

“While it makes me feel like I am contributing to my family as we try to settle in York Region, being stuck at home can create mental agony.”

~ Consultations for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*.

Facts:

- According to Statistics Canada 2006 Census data, 73 per cent of immigrant seniors who lived in York Region in 2006 lived with family while 27 per cent did not. In comparison, 67 per cent of non-immigrant seniors lived with family and 33 per cent did not.
- Immigrant seniors (29 per cent) were more likely to have spent time providing unpaid child care than non-immigrant seniors (16 per cent).

Old Age Security pension is not available until an immigrant has been a permanent resident for 10 years

Most established immigrant seniors and Canadian-born seniors receive an old age security pension from the government of Canada once they reach 65 years of age. Old Age Security pension is not available until an immigrant has been a permanent resident for 10 years. This could make recent immigrant seniors financially vulnerable. Federal sponsorship agreement stipulates that children who sponsor their parents to come to Canada are financially responsible for them for the initial 10 years. In such circumstances, a recent immigrant senior cannot apply for income support from the government. The federal government is currently reviewing Canada's retirement income system which includes Old Age Security pension.



Facts:

- The unemployment rates for immigrant seniors were 4.2 per cent for males and 5.2 per cent for females, compared to 5.4 per cent for the total population aged 15 and over.
- Immigrant seniors who lived in York Region in 2006 were less likely to participate in the labour force than non-immigrant seniors (13 per cent vs. 17 per cent).
- Immigrant seniors in York Region were slightly more likely than non-immigrant seniors to have been living in low income households (13 per cent vs. 11 per cent), compared to 13 per cent for the total population in 2005.
- In 2005, 42 per cent of immigrant seniors and 30 per cent of non-immigrant seniors in York Region who did not live in a family household lived below the low income before tax cut-off (LICO-BT). In comparison, nine per cent of immigrant seniors and three per cent of non-immigrant seniors who lived in a family household did.
- Immigrant seniors in York Region had a lower median total income than non-immigrant seniors (\$17,690 vs. \$29,665) in 2005.

“Immigrant community members have identified the ten year residency requirement as a barrier to income security, and therefore a barrier to successful settlement, integration, and citizenship.”

~ Alternative Planning Group, May 2009:12.

Seniors in general are at a higher risk of being exploited. For immigrant seniors, the challenges they face as newcomers can increase this risk

The federal government has recognized that seniors in general are at a higher risk of being exploited and have recently launched an Elder Abuse campaign. The campaign indicates that seniors from all walks of life are vulnerable to elder abuse and that it is happening in communities across Canada. Elder abuse is defined as any action by someone in a relationship of trust that results in harm or distress to an older person. Neglect is a lack of action by that person in a relationship of trust with the same result. Commonly recognized types of elder abuse include physical, psychological and financial. Often, more than one type of abuse occurs at the same time. Abuse can be a single incident or a repeated pattern of behaviour.

A study found that immigrant seniors may be hesitant to get help when in an abusive situation because they fear they will be deported. They are also afraid that bringing abusive situations to light could cause embarrassment to their families. (Source: Tyyskif, 2009).

Focus group participants for the consultations for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* indicated that they were often unaware of their rights as Canadian residents. This lack of understanding often means they cannot access programs and services available to them, increasing their vulnerability to isolation, health issues, injustices, and difficulties with integrating.

Programs such as South Asian Adult Day Program, operated by the Social Service Network in York Region, provide South Asian seniors access to information and activities on prevention and wellness philosophies in six different non-official languages.

“Older immigrants may not see themselves as victims of abuse.”

~ Shim and Nelson-Becker, 2009.

“They are often unaware of their legal or human rights or the community resources that are available to them.”

~ Podnieks, 2008.

“In some cultures, silence, shame and secrecy about abuse are common responses.”

~ Tsukada et al., 2001.



FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRANTS LIVING IN YORK REGION

“While Francophone immigration does not involve large numbers of people, it is bringing about profound, lasting changes in the host communities....It is about preserving the vitality of Canada’s official language communities.”

~ Belkhodja, 2008.

Facts:

- There is no established definition of Francophone. Due to shifts in the composition of the Canadian population, there has been a broadening of the concept of Francophone groups. In developing this portrait, a Statistics Canada definition of Francophone was used and includes mother tongue, first official language spoken, and persons who speak French on a regular basis at home. (Corbeil and Lafreniere, 2010).
- According to the Statistics Canada 2006 Census there were 720,105 Francophone immigrants living in Canada.
- Ontario is home to 14 per cent of Canada’s Francophone immigrants. This number is up from 61,023 in 2001 to 103,745 in 2006.
- In 2006, approximately 9,600 Francophone immigrants lived in York Region. Nearly half of York Region’s Francophone immigrants arrived in Canada before 1991. An additional 38 per cent arrived between 1991 and 2000; while 13 per cent were recent immigrants who arrived between 2001 and 2006. York Region has experienced a steady decline in the rate of receiving new Francophone immigrants.
- Nearly half (46 per cent) of Francophone immigrants who lived in York Region in 2006 were between the ages of 25 and 54, while less than one percent were children under the age of five.
- In 2006, 86 per cent of all Francophone immigrants who lived in York Region were Canadian citizens, slightly higher than the proportion of all immigrants (83 per cent).
- In 2006, 44 per cent of Francophone immigrants who lived in York Region were members of a visible minority group. The most common visible minority groups of Francophone immigrants in York Region in 2006 were Chinese (40 per cent), South Asian (18 per cent), West Asian (11 per cent) and Arab (11 per cent).
- The most common birth place of Francophone immigrants were:
 - » China (11 per cent)
 - » Romania (seven per cent)
 - » Italy (six per cent)
 - » Morocco (eight per cent)
 - » Iran (six per cent)
 - » France (five per cent)

Francophone Immigrants in York Region by Period of Immigration, 2006		
Before 1991	4,705	49%
1991 – 1995	1,635	17%
1996 – 2000	2,010	21%
2001 – 2006	1,250	13%
Total	9,600	100%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulation.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada identified Francophone immigrants as being a priority immigrant group with specific needs such as:

- **Providing settlement services specific to their needs including services in French**
- **Access to networks that support French-speaking immigrants**

It is a priority of the Government of Canada to support the linguistic duality in Canada and maintain our nation's French culture

~ Citizenship and Immigration Canada Strategic Plan for Settlement and Language Training, 2006.

Francophone immigrants in York Region face a unique challenge of not being able to access services in one of Canada's official languages

Similar to other immigrants integrating into York Region, Francophone immigrants find it challenging to secure appropriate employment and attain recognition of skills and experience. However, they also face an unexpected language barrier, and lack of access to services in French (e.g., settlement and health). Since York Region's Francophone immigrants are from such diverse backgrounds, they also face the challenge of finding established networks to connect with other Francophone immigrants.

The Canadian government wants to preserve the linguistic duality in Canada and offer quality services in French while facilitating the successful integration of Francophone immigrants. Currently, the federal government provides services in communities where French is necessary for economic integration. With the small numbers of Francophone immigrants living in York Region it makes it difficult to offer linguistically appropriate services.

Dispersion of Francophone residents in York Region leads to challenges connecting with other Francophones

While the Francophone immigrant population is small in York Region, some Francophone immigrants wish to connect with other Francophone groups. Francophone focus group participants cautioned that Francophone immigrants come from many different countries and often others from their country of origin do not speak French. For these Francophone immigrants, the challenges are two-fold: finding other Francophone immigrants in York Region and connecting through a language barrier with their ethno-cultural group for support or social networking.

In 2006, 91 per cent of all Francophone immigrants who lived in York Region spoke English and French, while four per cent spoke French only

According to Statistics Canada, less than one percent of all Francophone immigrants who lived in York Region in 2006 had no knowledge of English or French which is significantly lower than the proportion of all immigrants with no knowledge of English or French (eight per cent). Of the Francophone immigrant population in York Region, 91 per cent spoke English and French, while four per cent spoke French only. Also in 2006, 70 per cent of Francophone immigrants in York Region spoke a non-official language most often at home, while French was spoken most often at home by 11 per cent of Francophone immigrants. The non-official language most often spoken at home appears to be an indication of birth place.

Though French is not the primary language for the majority of the Region's Francophone immigrant population, they identify themselves as Francophone. Having language accessible services enables them to maintain and enhance their language, heritage and culture. There are no French language services in York Region. This is a lost opportunity for the Region.

The focus group participants for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* indicated there was a lack of French doctors in York Region, "despite a list of doctors made available it was difficult to locate one who spoke French fluently." Language is an important barrier when accessing health services because health vocabulary can be specific and complex.

"These (language accessible services) are not geographically accessible because it can take approximately two hours each way to reach them."

~ Consultations for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*.



"For Francophone immigrant participants, the need for language appropriate services was the biggest issue.... For some Francophone immigrants, the lack of language appropriate services was a shock because they thought since Canada was a bilingual country there would be more French speakers here. There is a need for more realistic expectations of language skills prior to arrival in York Region."

~ Consultations for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*.

French language schools help Francophone immigrants connect and integrate into the community

The decline in the number of Francophone immigrants who speak French most often at home indicates that French is not being used as often by Francophone immigrants and it is not being passed down to their children. French language schools are one mechanism to help Francophone immigrants maintain their French language and culture. Schools can also support Francophone immigrants integrating into their communities by helping them connect to neighbourhoods and community networks.

In York Region there are two English School Boards and two French School Boards. In addition to the English stream, the York Region District School Board and the York Catholic District School Board offer French immersion programs. French immersion programs are designed to provide non-francophone children with a high degree of proficiency in the French language. Between the two English School Boards there are a total of 23 elementary and 6 secondary French immersion schools, with an approximate enrolment of 11,000 students. Both English School Boards have experienced an increase in French immersion enrolment, indicating recognition of the importance of two languages. Promoting French language to all residents further helps Francophone immigrants integrate socially.

“While schools are one of the foremost vehicles for building a new and inclusive Francophone community, they have also been a key factor for the survival of traditional French-Canadian culture.”

~ Quell, 2008:7.

The French School Boards, under the Conseil scolaire de district du Centre-Sud-Ouest and the Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud (Public and Catholic School Boards), have a total of five elementary and one secondary school in York Region, with an approximate enrolment of 2,034 students. The French School Boards are experiencing growth in their enrolment and anticipate opening new school in York Region to meet this demand.

Also in York Region, the Association des Francophones de la région de York Inc is an ethno-cultural group that celebrates the French culture. Through this association, Francophone immigrants can have an opportunity to communicate and interact with other Francophones.



Francophone immigrants in the labour force are performing as well as all immigrants as a whole in York Region

In 2006, Francophone immigrants had a lower unemployment rate compared to all immigrants who lived in York Region. The unemployment rate for Francophone immigrants aged 15 and over was 4.9 per cent and the overall unemployment rate for all immigrants of the same age group who lived in York Region was 5.3 per cent.

“While the points awarded to potential immigrants suggest that knowledge of either official language is a benefit wherever in the country they settle, a newcomer whose first official language is French but who lives outside of Quebec will likely experience far greater obstacles in finding a job than someone whose first official language is English.”

~ Quell, 2008:7.

Facts:

- In 2006, Francophone immigrants aged 15 and over who lived in York Region had a lower unemployment rate (4.9 percent) than those who lived in Ontario (8.6 per cent) and the overall York Region population of the same age group (5.4 per cent).
- The low income rate in 2005 for Francophone immigrants who lived in York Region was higher than that for the overall York Region population (16 per cent vs. 13 per cent).
- Despite their higher levels of educational attainment, Francophone immigrants aged 15 years and over who lived in York Region in 2006 had, on average, a slightly lower median incomes in 2005 than all immigrants of the same age group who lived in York Region overall (\$29,658 vs. \$31,864).



CONCLUSION

All residents need an opportunity to succeed

York Region's rapid population growth and changing social fabric include a growing and diverse immigrant population. The Region strives to create welcoming and inclusive communities, where immigrants have opportunities to integrate successfully. *Community Portraits* highlights the unique integration challenges experienced by immigrant women, youth, seniors and Francophones.

It is important that all residents have an opportunity to succeed. Everyone benefits when people are able to fully engage in their community, find meaningful work, enjoy a high quality of life and have strong social connections. To achieve a fully engaged community requires continuous collaboration and partnerships with governments and community stakeholders to find new and different ways to deliver programs and services that support its success.

Under the *Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement* (Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2005) the federal government began investing in programs, resulting in the introduction of new federally funded programs and community initiatives that support the needs of these four targeted population groups in York Region. As we move forward, it will be important for community stakeholders and funders to play a part in supporting the needs of immigrants and work together to be innovative and build capacity within the Region.

The *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* provides the framework for the community to work in partnership and to share common goals. It is through a common vision that we can meet the priorities of the Strategy which include the unique needs of these four groups to have the opportunity to integrate and feel welcome in York Region. *Community Portraits* is one tool that facilitates the capacity building process and informs the development of programs and services to more effectively respond to the needs of residents.

What does this mean?

Similar to other immigrants integrating into York Region, immigrant women, youth, seniors and Francophones, in general, find it challenging accessing employment, upgrading credentials, learning an official language and learning Canadian values and norms.

- Need to develop effective outreach to these groups in places they already gather
- Programs and services need to be culturally appropriate and responsive to meet their settlement needs
- Government and major institutes like health services and schools need to examine how to make navigating systems easier
- Need for more employer education on the benefits of hiring newcomers and understanding skills and education from abroad
- Child care supports need to be expanded and more affordable to allow for women and seniors, who are caregivers to participate in the workforce or programs outside of the home

METHODOLOGY

Community Portraits incorporates the most recent data available on immigrants living in York Region including 2010 landing data, 2031 population forecasts using the 2006 Census, the results of the consultations undertaken for the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* in 2010, socio-demographic Census data and a current literature review.

New data from the 2011 Census will be released throughout 2012 but will only include general statistics on population, age and sex, families, households and marital status and language. No information has been given as to when more detailed data on immigration from the 2011 Census will be available.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Birth Place:

The country that an individual was born. In this report, China includes Special Administrative Regions such as Hong Kong and Macau.

Family:

Refers to a married couple (with or without children of either or both spouses), a couple living common-law (with or without children of either or both partners) or a lone parent of any marital status, with at least one child living in the same dwelling. A couple may be of opposite or same sex. 'Children' in a census family include grandchildren living with their grandparent(s) but with no parents present.

Immigrants:

People who are, or have been, landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some immigrants have resided in Canada for a number of years, while others have arrived recently. Most immigrants are born outside Canada, but a small number were born in Canada.

Immigrant Francophones:

People who are, or have been, landed immigrants in Canada and reported French as (a) first official language, (b) mother tongue, or (c) language spoken most often or on a regular basis at home.

Immigrant Seniors:

People aged 65 years or older who are, or have been, landed immigrants in Canada.

Immigrant Youth:

People aged between 15 and 24 years old who are, or have been, landed immigrants in Canada.

Landed immigrants:

Persons who have been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities.

Low income before tax cut-offs (LICO-BT):

Income levels at which families or persons not in economic families spend 20% more than average of their before tax income on food, shelter and clothing.

Non-official languages:

Languages, other than English or French, in which the individual can conduct a conversation. In this report, Chinese includes Mandarin and Cantonese.

Official language ability:

The ability to conduct a conversation in English only, in French only, or in both English and French.

Old Age Security pension:

A monthly benefit available to most Canadians 65 years of age who meet the Canadian legal status and residence requirements.

Recent Immigrants:

People who are, or have been, landed immigrants in Canada during the five-year time period from 2001 to 2006.

School attendance:

In 2006 Census, respondents were asked if they attended school in the nine months before Census Day and, if so, what type of school they attended. They can select one of the following responses: attended elementary, junior high or high school; attended trade school, college, CEGEP or other non-university institution; attended university; or did not attend school. School attendance data captures both full-time and part-time participation of respondents in Canada's education systems.

Temporary foreign workers:

Refers to any foreign national who seeks to engage in work in Canada.

Total income:

Refers to the total money income received from sources, such as wages and salaries, child benefits, Old Age Security pension and Guaranteed Income Supplement, benefits from Canada Pension Plan, Employment Insurance, other income from government sources, investment income, retirement pensions, and other money income.

Visible minorities:

The *Employment Equity Act* defines visible minorities as 'persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour'.

Working-age:

The age range from 25 years to 64 years of age.

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