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LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE: YORK REGION IMMIGRATION SETTLEMENT STRATEGY

The Community and Health Services Committee recommends:

- 1. Receipt of the presentation by Lisa Gonsalves, Acting Managing Director, Strategic Services Integration and Policy and Robert Hickey, Catholic Community Services of York Region, Project Partner for the Local Immigration Partnership Initiative; and**
- 2. Adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated August 18, 2011, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services.**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council, as a member of the Community Partnership Council endorse the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy (Council Attachment 1)*.
2. The Regional Clerk send a letter to all the governing bodies of the member organizations of the Community Partnership Council requesting their endorsement of the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*.
3. Staff of the Community and Health Services Department be directed to take action on establishing the Municipal Diversity Reference Group.
4. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to York Region Members of Parliament, Members of Provincial Parliament, local municipalities, the Human Services Planning Board, and the Community Reference Group for the Community Social Data Strategy and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

2. PURPOSE

This report seeks Regional Council endorsement of the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*, a federally funded initiative intended to facilitate the earlier integration of newcomers. The Strategy sets a long-term vision for the overall well-being of our newcomers and creating a community that is welcoming and inclusive. Also, this report outlines the next steps for action planning and initial activities proposed for the implementation of the Strategy.

3. BACKGROUND

York Region was selected to lead the Local Immigration Partnership initiative to develop a York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy

York Region is home to over 1 million residents. In 2006, 43 per cent of York Region residents were immigrants and by 2031, it is projected that 55 per cent of the Region's population will be immigrants (Source: Regional Municipality of York Planning and Development Department). This growing immigrant population has influence on the economic, cultural and social life of our community. Successful integration of newcomers has enormous impact at the local level where municipalities have an integral role in supporting the integration process. It is important to proactively plan for rapid growth and diversity to guide how communities grow, develop and evolve. In recognizing this, the federal government developed the Local Immigration Partnership initiative to enable the municipalities to take a lead on immigration planning in collaboration with community stakeholders.

In 2009, The Regional Municipality of York was selected by the federal government to lead the York Region Local Immigration Partnership initiative. York Region is one of approximately 45 Local Immigration Partnership projects across Ontario charged with establishing multi-sectoral Community Partnership Councils and to develop local immigration settlement strategies. The focus of these strategies is to increase coordination of settlement services, improve labour market integration, and increase regional capacity to successfully integrate immigrants.

The Region received approximately \$1.2 million between September, 2009 and March, 2012 to develop the Strategy and begin the action planning process.

As stipulated in the funding agreement with the federal government, the first phase of the Local Immigration Partnership initiative is the completion of the Strategy. The next phase of the project will be the development of indicators and action planning to support the implementation of the Strategy.

The Community Partnership Council and extensive community stakeholder engagement was an integral part of the Strategy development process

In February 2010, Regional Council appointed the Community Partnership Council (CPC) to work collaboratively with the Region to develop the Immigration Settlement Strategy. The CPC is comprised of up to 25 multi-sector members including representatives from community organizations, school boards, employer planning tables, local municipalities, police services, academia, the Francophone community and all three levels of government. The CPC is co-chaired by Mayor Frank Scarpitti, Town of Markham and Stephen Lam, Director of Immigrant and Community Services, Catholic Community Services of York Region as the project partner.

Between the Spring and Winter of 2010, consultations were held with over 2,000 stakeholders - both newcomers and long-term residents, community organizations, agencies or groups and local municipalities. The consultations examined the assets, gaps, opportunities and challenges that face newcomers and those stakeholders that support them.

An extensive literature review was conducted to augment understanding of local immigration planning. A review of best practices regarding community planning and maximizing immigrant potential was also conducted. The consultation findings and the literature review are summarized in *Council Attachment 2*.

The socio-economic research findings from *Changing Landscape: Recent Immigrants Living in York Region* were used to inform the development of the Strategy.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The Strategy takes a holistic perspective in setting the long-term vision for the well-being of newcomers living in York Region

In order to build healthy and vibrant communities and maximize the benefits of immigration, it is important that newcomers are economically, socially, culturally and civically/politically integrated. Integration is a two-way street, where the broader community has a responsibility to support and facilitate the integration process; and the newcomer has a responsibility to strive to participate and contribute to the community.

In realizing this and using the Results Based Accountability model, the Strategy sets five community results that identify the long-term vision and short-term priorities for action. Table 1 illustrates the community results and a summary of priorities. The Strategy contains a more detailed description of the priorities that will guide development of the three-year action plan.

Table 1
Immigration Settlement Strategy: Community Results and Priorities

Community Results	Summary of Priorities
A community that is welcoming and inclusive	• Support community hub model and immigration portal (www.yorkwelcome.ca) to encourage knowledge sharing, collaborative planning and effective resource sharing. • Build community capacity to be inclusive and equitable through adequate resources, building community awareness and acceptance.

Community Results	Summary of Priorities
Newcomers are economically integrated	• Support financial stability through adequate employment that matches skills and qualifications and stable housing. • Enable newcomer economic contributions through supporting entrepreneurship.
Newcomers are socially integrated	• Promote health and wellness through increased accessibility to services and social connectedness. • Increase sense of safety and security in their community that contribute to the sense of belonging. • Address the needs of immigrant priority population (women, youth, seniors).
Newcomers are culturally integrated	• Build awareness and respect amongst cultures through creating opportunities for cross-cultural interactions. • Encourage participation of newcomers in community arts/cultural/recreational activities.
Newcomers are civically/politically integrated	• Increase understanding, connectedness and trust between police services, justice system, government services, the political system and newcomers. • Promote understanding of rights and responsibilities so that newcomers are able to actively engage and take on leadership roles in the community.

MOVING FORWARD WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

The next phase of the Local Immigration Partnership initiative will be to set an action plan. Action planning will include identifying indicators, partners, and engaging and involving the community in contributing to the community results, as well as identifying potential funding opportunities. The priorities will be implemented in three-year phases and will be guided by what works, the resources available, and the area of influence the partners have in addressing the priorities. The CPC will monitor and report on progress using indicators at the end of the three-year cycle.

Indicators will drive measureable actions to make a difference in the community

Indicators provide qualitative and quantitative data that measure the trends and the desired condition of well-being and help steer decisions, determine actions and measure progress. Based on the indicator trend, the CPC will then identify actions that have the maximum chance of advancing the community results. This will include what can be done both individually and collectively to flatten the trend, slow the trend or turn the trend in a more positive direction.

Collective leadership and engaging the community are keys to success

A key building block for the implementation of the Strategy is the recognition that success depends on collaborative efforts, strong partnerships and commitment to actions from the entire community. It will be important to engage the broader community in solutions as all stakeholders play a role in building a vibrant community.

As a member of the CPC, the Region will continue to lead and be an active partner in advancing the results of the Strategy. Each member of the CPC will be asked to endorse the Strategy and demonstrate collective leadership in taking individual or collective action to contribute to the community results.

York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy is well aligned with other Regional plans

The Local Immigration Partnership initiative is well aligned with the strategic direction of the Region, the provincial and federal governments, and is well positioned to make a difference in the community.

York Region's process of developing the Strategy using a grass-roots approach of engaging the community and utilizing the Results Based Accountability framework has received favourable responses from Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

This Strategy is one of the many Regional plans that support the creation of welcoming and inclusive communities. The Strategy is consistent with the Community and Health Services Multi-Year Plan goals and is closely aligned with the work of Human Services Planning Board's *Making Ends Meet* initiative, which aims to create opportunities for low to moderate income families and individuals struggling to make ends meet in York Region.

Given the potential opportunities for alignment and collaboration, internal engagement of Regional Departments has begun through presentations and active discussions to explore how the Region can support and contribute to the community results.

Next steps and initial successes resulting from the Strategy

The proposed next steps will begin with a community launch of the Strategy in the Fall, 2011.

The Region in collaboration with the CPC will be developing actions as initial successes of the Strategy including:

- Releasing profiles on immigrant priority groups (Women, Youth, Seniors and the Francophone Community) for service planning and increasing the understanding of the unique needs of these groups.
- Maximizing the use of York Region Immigration Portal to provide current and relevant information to newcomers and the organizations that support them. The Portal would serve as an on-line hub for sharing knowledge and hosting research and planning documents created by community organizations.
- Exploring new partnerships and the creation of a funders table that will help identify and guide community investments.
- Exploring an International Educated Professional conference which, if funding is secured, would involve a one-day conference that provides an opportunity for all levels of governments, professional associations, employers and newcomers to network and learn about the Canadian work place. More information on this will be presented to Regional Council through a joint report with the Planning and Development Services Department later in the year.

Establishing a Municipal Diversity Reference Group will support collaboration between local municipalities

Another proposed action in the implementation phase is the creation of a Municipal Diversity Reference Group as a network for information sharing between the Region and the local municipalities. During the consultations, it was identified that local municipalities have a role in creating a welcoming and inclusive community in order to grow and evolve with the changing communities. Several municipalities have diversity/race relations initiatives. A Municipal Diversity Reference Group would provide a forum for collaborative planning between local municipalities to discuss common needs, possible tools for other municipalities and best practices. It can also act as a vehicle for public education and awareness in York Region. The Municipal Diversity Reference Group would work closely with the York Regional Police's Diversity and Cultural Resources Bureau and be coordinated through the Region. Regional Council will be updated as the initiative develops.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Local Immigration Partnership initiative is 100 per cent funded by the federal government

The Local Immigration Partnership initiative is 100 per cent funded by the federal government for administration, support to the CPC, project development and staffing.

As the federal government views Local Immigration Partnership initiatives as eventually becoming self-sustaining, the Region will begin exploring other funding opportunities to support the actions that emerge in the implementation phase.

Funding to support any new initiatives as a result of the Strategy will be within and in-line with the Community and Health Services Multi-Year Plan and subject to annual budget approvals.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipalities have been actively contributing to the process of developing the Strategy through representation on the CPC and participation in the community consultations.

If approved by Regional Council, local municipalities will be engaged further in the development of the proposed Municipal Diversity Reference Group.

7. CONCLUSION

In developing the Strategy, the Local Immigration Partnership initiative has provided a forum to actively engage newcomers and bring together multi-sectoral partners to proactively plan for a changing and growing community. Through this collaborative process, the Strategy arrives at five community results and priorities that strive to create a welcoming and inclusive community.

Successful integration of newcomers has enormous impact on the community's quality of life and its ability to compete in the 21st century. The Strategy can be used to inform program and service planning and effective use of resources to meet the needs of newcomers living in York Region and provides a framework for community stakeholders to engage and take action towards creating an inclusive community where all residents including newcomers can succeed.

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

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The two attachments referred to in this clause are bound and enclosed with this report.)

YORK REGION LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP: IMMIGRATION SETTLEMENT STRATEGY

SEPTEMBER 2011



DRAFT



Mayor
Frank Scarpitti
Town of Markham



Regional Councillor
Jack Heath
Town of Markham



Regional Councillor
Jim Jones
Town of Markham



Regional Councillor
Gordon Landon
Town of Markham



Regional Councillor
Joe Li
Town of Markham



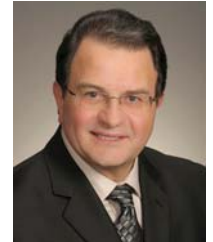
Mayor
David Barrow
Town of Richmond Hill



Mayor
Maurizio Bevilacqua
City of Vaughan



Chairman and CEO
Bill Fisch



Regional Councillor
Vito Spatafora
Town of Richmond Hill



Regional Councillor
Gino Rosati
City of Vaughan



Regional Councillor
Michael Di Biase
City of Vaughan



Regional Councillor
Deb Schulte
City of Vaughan



Mayor
Robert Grossi
Town of Georgina



Regional Councillor
Danny Wheeler
Town of Georgina



Mayor
Geoffrey Dawe
Town of Aurora



Mayor
Virginia Hackson
Town of East Gwillimbury



Mayor
Steve Pellegrini
Township of King



Mayor
Wayne Emmerson
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

A Message from York Regional Council

The Regional Municipality of York is one of the fastest growing communities in Canada. Each year approximately 10,000 newcomers call York Region home. Newcomers enrich our communities, fostering growth economically and culturally.

Successful integration of newcomers to York Region is a two-way street. The community has a responsibility to support the integration of newcomers just as newcomers have a responsibility to participate and contribute to the community. By working together and embracing cultural diversity, we strengthen our economy, labour market and our community as a whole.

The York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy is a “made-in-York Region” plan to enhance the integration and success of newcomers. It is intended to guide community action that enhances the quality of life, builds strong supports and increases opportunities for all residents.

Through the Local Immigration Partnership initiative, this Strategy was developed in consultation with nearly 2,000 stakeholders including newcomers, long-term residents, local municipalities, community leaders, service agencies, employer networks and organizations from across York Region.

York Regional Council thanks the Government of Canada for providing funding for the Local Immigration Partnership initiative and appreciates the efforts of the Community Partnership Council and the many dedicated partners who helped develop this Strategy. The future success of this plan depends on continued collaboration. York Regional Council encourages individuals, organizations and businesses to take an active role on this important journey.



Regional Councillor
Brenda Hogg
Town of Richmond Hill



Mayor
Tony Van Bynen
Town of Newmarket



Regional Councillor
John Taylor
Town of Newmarket

A Message from the Community Partnership Council

We all have a role to play in successfully integrating newcomers into our neighbourhoods, strengthening our economy and enhancing our quality of life.

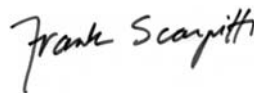
The Community Partnership Council is proud to present its York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy. It advocates a proactive and inclusive approach to helping newcomers establish a sense of belonging in York Region, and by extension strengthen the overall fabric of the community where we live and do business.

The Strategy sets the groundwork to drive change. It takes a holistic approach to responding to rapid growth and increasing diversity; including all sectors of our community. The Strategy sets a long-term vision to guide the actions that ultimately shape the way our community grows and develops.

Our sincere appreciation goes out to the many individuals and organizations involved in the development of this Strategy. We thank Regional Council for their insight, leadership and support. Thank you to the federal government for funding the Local Immigration Partnership initiative. We applaud the efforts of the members of the Community Partnership Council for their passion and commitment.

Staying ahead of the changes poses challenges and opportunities for us all. We now have a plan – and need the support of the broader community and collaboration among all partners to put the plan into action. Together we can lead change for a stronger community.

Sincerely,



Mayor Frank Scarpitti
Town of Markham
Co-Chair, Community Partnership Council



Stephen Lam
Director, Immigrant Services and Community Programs
Catholic Community Services of York Region
Co-Chair, Community Partnership Council

Community Partnership Council Members

Mayor Frank Scarpitti (Co-Chair), Town of Markham

Stephen Lam (Co-Chair), Catholic Community Services of York Region

Bill Fisch, Chairman and CEO, Regional Municipality of York

Lina Bigioni, Regional Municipality of York

Mayor Tony Van Bynen, Town of Newmarket

Tricia Myatt, Town of Richmond Hill

Mirella Tersigni, City of Vaughan

Sandra Tam, Town of Markham

Moy Wong-Tam, Centre for Information and Community Services of Ontario

Robert Cazzola, COSTI Immigrant Services

Patricia Cousins, Social Enterprise for Canada

Nella Iasci, Job Skills

Al Wilson, Workforce Planning Board

Elizabeth McIsaac, Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council

Ricky Veerappan, York Regional Police

Jennifer Miller, York Central Hospital

Leanne Rosteing, York Catholic District School Board

Cecil Roach, York Region District School Board

Serge Paul, Conseil scolaire Viamonde

Janice Chu, United Way of York Region

HIGHLIGHTS

YORK REGION IMMIGRATION SETTLEMENT STRATEGY



The York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy's long-term vision is to support the overall well-being of both newcomers and long-term residents of York Region. The Strategy was developed in collaboration with the Community Partnership Council to increase coordination of settlement services, improve labour market outcomes and build York Region's capacity to be welcoming and inclusive to the newcomers, who will make York Region their home.

Consultation played a significant role in understanding what is, and will be, required to build York Region's capacity. Almost 2,000 stakeholders participated in community consultations across York Region between May and December 2010. Participants included newcomers, long-term residents, community leaders, and representatives of organizations, agencies and groups, local municipalities, employer networks and planning tables. The consultation findings formed the basis for many of the directions in the Strategy.

The Strategy includes a series of community results that set out a long-term vision for York Region where newcomers are able to live, find employment and prosper. To create this future York Region, the Strategy also highlights short-term priorities for action. These priorities will inform program and service planning, organizational development and resource allocation to enhance the integration of newcomers.

The landscape and social fabric of York Region are changing. By 2031, 55 per cent of York Region's population will be immigrants. This demographic shift has important implications for future planning of infrastructure, designing programs and services, developing a strong economy and fostering a welcoming and inclusive community. All community stakeholders, long term residents and newcomers have a role to play in creating a community where all residents can succeed.



Long-Term Vision For York Region

York Region is a community that is welcoming and inclusive – a community that openly receives newcomers, promotes social equity and is cohesive. It is a community that understands the needs of newcomers and facilitates their full participation in all aspects of community life, the economy and Canadian society.

Priorities to guide a three-year action plan

- Support the continued development of the community hub model (i.e. Welcome Centres) and the York Region Immigration Portal
- Build community capacity to be welcoming, inclusive and equitable by providing adequate resources, fostering partnerships and promoting community awareness and acceptance
- Continue and improve collaboration and knowledge sharing across sectors and different levels of governments
- Improve accessibility and awareness of programs and supports to address issues of social isolation and labour market access
- Address issues related to language barriers and the impact on all areas of integration

Newcomers are economically integrated – newcomers strive and are succeeding in the labour market, have jobs that match their skills and education, are living in affordable, stable and safe housing and have a liveable household income. Newcomers help meet labour market shortages and keep York Region economically competitive.

Priorities to guide a three-year action plan

- Work with employers to hire newcomers
- Facilitate newcomers' understanding and learning of the "Canadian work culture"
- Support successful "first job in Canada" experiences
- Support newcomer entrepreneurs
- Offer better support for the accreditation process
- Improve quantity and quality of affordable, safe and stable housing

Newcomers are socially integrated – newcomers connect with the community and feel included, valued and positively linked to the people, places and things within and outside their communities. Newcomers feel safe and are living healthy lives.

Priorities to guide a three-year action plan

- Meet the individual needs of newcomers and provide a continuum of supports.
- Help newcomers to be connected and live in safe communities.



- Address mental health challenges of newcomers
- Help newcomers become actively involved in their local community or neighbourhood
- Ensure newcomer women have dedicated social support programs focussed on their needs
- Help newcomer seniors become aware of and access supports and services available to them
- Help newcomer youth feel welcome and receive the support they need to excel

Newcomers are culturally integrated – newcomers have and seize opportunities to be actively engaged, feel part of Canadian culture and understand Canadian values. Newcomers can practice and share their own culture and learn about and interact with other cultures. Newcomers understand the social and cultural norms of various cultures and are able to practice them appropriately.

Priorities to guide a three-year action plan

- Build awareness and respect amongst cultures
- Increase access to shared and public space, where ethno-cultural communities can gather, celebrate cultures and learn from each other
- Promote cross-cultural interactions and diversity through arts/media/recreation
- Nurture and celebrate diversity and the multi-cultural identity of York Region

Newcomers are civically and politically integrated – newcomers understand, can access and trust the Canadian government, policing services and the political and justice systems. Newcomers take active roles in community building and take leadership roles within organizations and institutions.

Priorities for a three-year action plan

- Promote and monitor diversity for leadership roles within organizations and institutions
- Increase newcomers' opportunities to build their skills and increase learning through volunteering
- Help newcomers understand their rights and responsibilities so they can become actively engaged and civic-minded residents of Canada
- Ensure organizations commit and practise values of equity and diversity
- Strengthen relationships between newcomer communities and policing services, justice, government and political systems

Developing A Three-Year Action Plan

The Community Partnership Council will develop a three-year action plan to implement the priorities set out in the Strategy. Action items will include identifying indicators and key partners, engaging the community, and gaining commitment from funders, organizations, the public and private sector to commit to the community results described above.

After three years, the Council will report on the community's progress in advancing the results. The action plan will be revisited at that time to determine whether any changes or improvements are required to the course of action.

Next Steps And Initial Successes Resulting From The Strategy

The proposed next steps will begin with a community launch of the Strategy in the Fall of 2011. The launch event will be a forum that allows for innovation through dialogues and discussions for moving the Strategy to creating meaningful actions and solutions.

The Region in collaboration with Community Partnership Council will be developing actions as initial successes of the Strategy including:

- Releasing profiles on the immigrant priority groups (Women, Youth, Seniors and the Francophone community) for service planning and increase understanding of the unique needs of these groups.
- Maximizing the use of the York Region Immigration Portal website to provide current and relevant information to newcomers and the organizations that support them. The Portal would serve as

an on-line hub for sharing knowledge and hosting research and planning documents created by community organizations.

- Exploring new partnerships and the creation of a funders table that will help identify and guide community investments and resource allocations to achieve effective community results in York Region.
- Exploring an International Educated Professionals conference, which if funding is secured, would involve a one-day conference that connects levels of government, professional associations, employers and newcomers together to network and learn about the Canadian workplace.
- Establishing a Municipal Diversity Reference Group that would build on existing diversity/race relations initiatives in local municipalities and would provide a forum for them to engage in collaborative planning, discuss common needs, identify possible tools for other municipalities and best practices. It can also act as a vehicle for public education and awareness in York Region. The Municipal Diversity Reference Group would work closely with the York Regional Police's Diversity and Cultural Resources Bureau and be coordinated through the Region.





The York Region Immigration Portal

This is a one-stop community-based website for newcomers and anyone who is new to the Region. It provides information about local government services, community programs, services and supports. The York Region Immigration Portal can help you find information about living, working and learning in York Region.

You can find a full copy of the The York Region Immigration Strategy on the portal at:

www.yorkwelcome.ca

York Region Local Immigration Partnership Initiative
Funded By:



Citizenship and
Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et
Immigration Canada

York Region Local Immigration
PARTNERSHIP 
LEADING CHANGE FOR A STRONGER COMMUNITY

Acknowledgements

The York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy was developed under the leadership of the Commissioner of Community and Health Services Department, The Regional Municipality of York and the support of the Community Partnership Council.

We appreciate the support and commitment of the Community Partnership Council throughout the process of developing the Immigration Settlement Strategy. We thank the project partner, Catholic Community Services of York Region, for their committed leadership and contributions to the project.

We gratefully acknowledge the participation of various community stakeholders in our consultations including newcomers, long-term residents, community leaders, and representatives of organizations, agencies and groups, local municipalities, employer networks and planning tables in York Region.

York Region staff played a key role in the development of this Strategy. Thank you to all the Branches of Community and Health Services and other Regional Departments for their support and contributions to this project.

The Strategy is a part of the Local Immigration Partnership initiative which is funded by the Government of Canada through Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

For more information about the York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy contact:

The Regional Municipality of York
Community and Health Services
Department

Strategic Service Integration
and Policy Branch

17250 Yonge St., 2nd Floor
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

Attention: Program Manager,
Local Immigration Partnership initiative

Phone: 1-877-464-9675 Ext. 2087

Email: yrimmigrationpartnership@york.ca

Website: www.yorkwelcome.ca

Note: This material has been prepared for specific use by The Regional Municipality of York.

Organizations wishing to use any portion of the *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy* are requested to:

Contact the *Office of the Commissioner, York Region Community and Health Services Department*, regarding the purpose(s) for which this material will be used.

Use the following citation when referencing this document:

The Regional Municipality of York, (2011). *York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*, Newmarket, Ontario.

Acknowledge that The Regional Municipality of York is providing a copy of its material for reference purposes only.

INTRODUCTION

The York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy is intended to increase coordination of settlement services, improve labour market integration, and build York Region's capacity to be a welcoming community. The Strategy's long-term vision is to support the overall well-being of both newcomers and long-term residents of York Region. It also includes short-term priorities for actions to attain this vision. These priorities will inform program and service planning, organizational development and resource allocation to enhance the integration of newcomers.

The successful integration of newcomers has enormous impact on any community's quality of life and its ability to compete in the 21st century. In recognizing this, the Strategy provides a framework in which all community stakeholders can engage and take action. Our goal is to create an inclusive community where all residents, including newcomers, can succeed.

The Strategy was developed through the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) initiative. This initiative is funded by the Government of Canada through Citizenship and Immigration Canada.



BACKGROUND

York Region has a history of collaboration

York Region has worked successfully with community stakeholders on many diversity initiatives to increase our understanding of the needs of newcomers.

In response to the rapid growth and diversity, Community and Health Service's Multi-Year Plan's goal includes fostering social inclusion and economic opportunities by addressing the needs of a growing and diverse community.

~ The Regional Municipality of York, Community and Health Service Multi-Year Plan 2010-2015

For example, in 2005, through the former Human Services Planning Coalition (HSPC), the Region worked with key community stakeholders to launch the Inclusivity Action Plan (IAP). This plan was a region-wide community-based approach to promoting inclusivity. The IAP project focused on the broader issues of York Region's ethno-cultural diversity.

The HSPC was successful in advocating for funding for IAP initiatives such as Vaughan's Welcome Centre and the York Region Immigration Portal. The HSPC has evolved into the Human Services Planning Board of York Region. Its current mandate is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of human services in York Region through both capacity building in the human services sector and collaborative advocacy.

The IAP was successful in engaging leading service organizations in York Region that serve immigrant communities. Through the success of initiatives such as IAP, York Region has built capacity to support, lead and participate in collaborative planning. Ultimately, this has led to its leadership role in immigration planning with key community stakeholders through the LIP initiative.



In its report, "Best Practices in Settlement Services", the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration identified the Local Immigration Partnership initiative as a best practice, and recommended continued support in Ontario and potential expansion to other provinces.

~ The House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, 2010

The Region was appointed to lead the York Region LIP initiative

In 2009, the Region was selected by the federal government to lead the York Region LIP initiative.

Objectives of LIP:

- Improve access to, and coordination of, immigrant integration services (settlement, language training and labour market integration).
- Improve labour market outcomes for newcomers.
- Strengthen regional awareness and capacity to successfully integrate immigrants.

A Community Partnership Council (CPC) was created to develop the York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy. The CPC has up to 25 members representing various sectors. These sectors include: Regional and local municipalities, settlement services, language training, accreditation, school boards, the Francophone community, employer networks and labour market development groups, academia, police and community services. The CPC also includes four ex-officio members from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Service Canada, and the Ontario ministries of Citizenship and Immigration, and Training, Colleges and Universities.

Council members are the ambassadors of the Immigration Settlement Strategy in their respective organizations and communities. One of the key elements for success of the Strategy will depend on this collaborative effort and community leadership.

Strategic alignment: Why an Immigration Settlement Strategy for York Region?

Through the Immigration Settlement Strategy, we have an opportunity to help guide how our communities grow, develop and evolve. At a time when populations are aging, the successful integration of immigrants is critical to our ability to compete globally, grow economically and develop a vibrant community. Immigrants bring a wealth of assets – from professional degrees, diverse cultures and languages, and global networks – that are key factors in economic prosperity. By the end of the decade, it is estimated that immigration will account for 100 per cent of Canada's net labour force growth.¹ It is crucial that newcomers are integrated as quickly as possible into the fabric of our communities so they are able to contribute to the high quality of life enjoyed by all York Region residents. This Strategy aims to help newcomers integrate and contribute to every dimension of life – economic, social, cultural and political. The Strategy includes and reflects the values of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Addressing barriers and maintaining the appropriate array of services, supports and opportunities will help to mitigate the settlement challenges newcomers face and support their successful integration.

It is estimated that over the next 10 years, an estimated 100,000-150,000 baby boomers in the York Region workforce will begin to retire.

~ Aging Workforce Study, Final Report, The Regional Municipality of York

A recent study found that:

- 83 per cent of those employers who hired skilled immigrants to find new business opportunities in targeted local cultural communities felt this was an effective strategy.
- 93 per cent of those employers who hired skilled immigrants to help diversify their company's client base felt this was effective.

~ Why Employers Hire Immigrants, 2011, TRIEC

Under-utilization of newcomers accounts for a loss of \$4 to \$6 billion to the Canadian economy.

~ The Conference Board of Canada, 2008

STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Creating a welcoming and inclusive community requires all community stakeholders to engage. No one organization alone can achieve this. It is important to identify and engage all those who can and should play a role.

To do this, the York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy has been developed in partnership with community stakeholders, long-term residents, newcomers and all levels of government.



The Strategy is well aligned with the strategic direction of federal and provincial government.

The York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy is influenced, built on and supported by various Regional, provincial and federal strategic plans including Citizenship and Immigration Canada's Strategic Plan for Settlement and Language Training. Other examples of federal and provincial initiatives that align with the Strategy include:

Employment Ontario, Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU)

Employment Ontario's Employment Services help Ontarians find sustainable employment. It bridges the gap between employers seeking workplace skills and human resources to meet their business needs, and individuals seeking employment.

Employment Services offer a range of resources, supports and services to respond to the career and employment needs of individuals, and the skilled labour needs of employers. It can help individuals on a path to higher skill training and employment.

Service Canada

The Working in Canada website (WorkinginCanada.gc.ca) is the Government of Canada's leading source for labour market information, offering free and authoritative occupational information such as educational requirements, main duties, wage rates and salaries, current employment trends and outlooks.

WorkinginCanada.gc.ca provides job seekers, workers and those who are new to the Canadian labour market with helpful information required to make informed decisions about where to live and work.

Integrated Health Service Plan, Central Local Health Integration Network

One of its aims is to reduce disparities in health among diverse groups by creating more equitable access to health services, consistent high quality care, and an equitable distribution of health resources, among others.

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 see themselves reflected in their learning environment."

~Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009

Creating a welcoming community in local municipalities

In York Region, there are nine local municipalities that play a key role in supporting newcomer integration. This support occurs through various municipally-led initiatives such as committees, forums and celebrations that promote inclusivity and diversity in their communities. Below are some examples of such initiatives:

Aurora

- Celebrate Aurora
- Aurora Public Library's English conversation program

East Gwillimbury

- New Residents' Guide

Georgina

- Georgina Equity and Diversity Advisory Committee
- Cultural Mapping – Redefining Culture Seminars

King

- Multicultural Harvest Celebration in Music and Song

Markham

- Markham Race Relations Committee
- Markham Diversity Action Plan: Everyone Welcome
- Staff Diversity Training and Resources

Newmarket

- Inclusivity Advisory Committee
- Around the World – Multicultural Tour

Richmond Hill

- Community engagement through ethnic forums, community roundtables, and outreach activities
- Partnership with Maytree Foundation to promote diversity in Committee appointments
- A Cultural Plan – comprehensive long-term plan that shapes the Town's cultural development

Vaughan

- Community Equity and Diversity Committee
- Diversity Strategy for City of Vaughan
- Language Line

Whitchurch-Stouffville

- Whitchurch-Stouffville's Museum's "The Land and Her People – Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" Program
- Whitchurch-Stouffville Library's initiative on Board Diversity
- Community Newcomer Information Session



What we have: Swim to Survive Program

Swim-To-Survive, a drowning prevention program, targeted to grade three students including newcomers, is provided in partnership with the local municipalities, school boards, and the Lifesaving Society.

What we have: Vaughan Community Health Centre

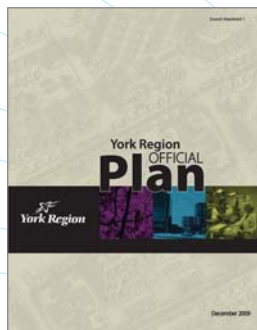
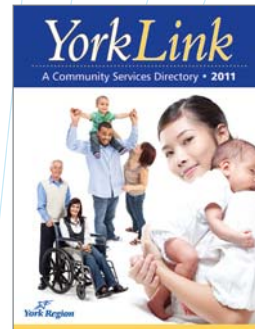
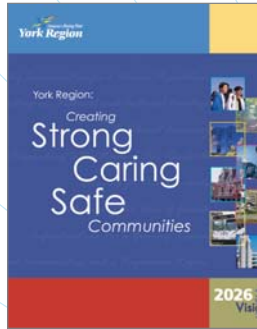
The Vaughan Community Health Centre is a not-for-profit organization that provides primary healthcare and social services to residents, including newcomers, of the City of Vaughan.

What we have: The Multimedia Film Festival of York Region

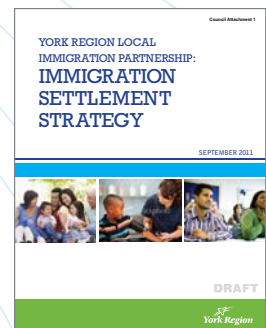
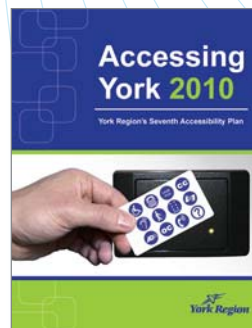
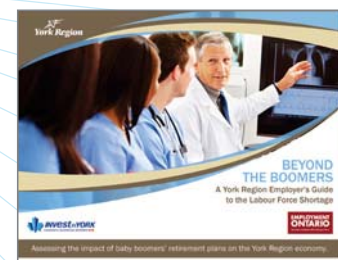
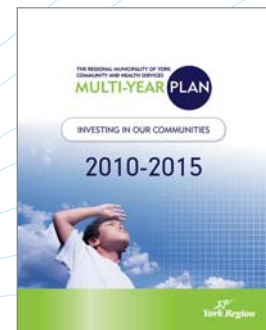
The Multimedia Film Festival of York Region is an annual digital photo/film festival that gives voice to the experience of cultural diversity. Entries are screened at venues in every municipality. Film Festival partners include municipalities, agencies, local groups and the corporate sector.

Regional Plans help to create a welcoming and inclusive community

Various regional plans and initiatives contribute to the creation of a welcoming and inclusive community for all residents of York Region. The York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy will also play a part by focussing on the newest members of our community.



**A community that
is welcoming and
inclusive**



LENS USED TO DEVELOP THE STRATEGY

Purpose

The York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy is intended as a focal point for collaborative action that aims to:

1. Identify the changes needed at the individual, community and systemic level to enhance integration of newcomers. This will result in a better quality of life for all York Region residents.
2. Identify opportunities, gaps and recommendations that will inform the future planning of programs and services, organizational development and resource allocation to achieve effective community results in York Region.
3. Identify a mechanism for collaborative stakeholder partnerships. This mechanism will be based on common goals that strengthen awareness and capacity for newcomer integration in York Region.
4. Be a learning strategy that is sustainable and continues to grow and be responsive to policies, priorities of governments and emerging economic, demographic trends and community needs.
5. Provide a foundation for an action plan that reflects local needs and has measurable outcomes that can be used by the community to evaluate its progress.



Principles

The following principles, along with the objectives of the LIP initiative, are the lens through which the Strategy's strategic direction and priorities were developed. The Strategy is:

1. Asset-based and built on existing strengths, capacities and best practices of the broad range of organizations and communities in York Region.
2. A holistic plan that promotes inclusive, equitable, welcoming and diverse communities which fully engage and integrate newcomers in the civic, social, cultural, political and economic life of York Region.
3. Centered on the newcomers and responsive to cultural differences and the diverse voices and wisdom of York Region's immigrant communities.
4. Reflective of the broad range of programs and supports that promote newcomer integration including settlement, mainstream and informal supports.
5. Proactive and responsive to the increasingly complex and diverse needs of stakeholders through leadership, innovation and enhanced communication.
6. A viable plan that has realistic goals and achievable outcomes and includes a commitment to continuous monitoring and improvement.
7. A framework for local planning founded on shared responsibility and individual accountability that was developed through a transparent and collaborative process.

COLLABORATIVE PLANNING:

A FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

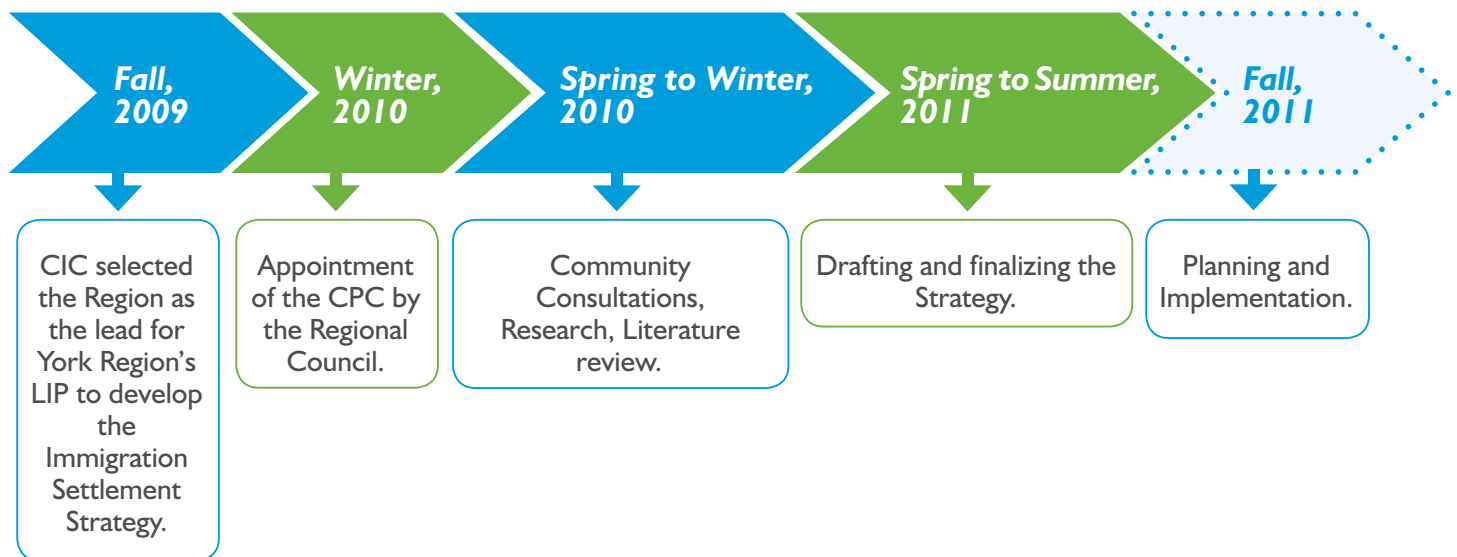
*Close to 2,000 stakeholders were engaged
in the Strategy development process*

The Strategy development process has been informed by statistical research, a literature review, community consultations and strategic planning sessions.

Almost 2,000 stakeholders including newcomers, long-term residents, community leaders; and representatives of organizations, agencies and groups, local municipalities, employer networks and planning tables from across York Region took part in community consultations.

The purpose of the consultations was to engage various communities to better understand the settlement and integration patterns and needs of newcomers in York Region and the associated successes and challenges. The results of the consultations are published in the report, *York Region Local Immigration Partnership initiative: Summary of Community Consultations and Literature Review*.

Development of the York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy



YORK REGION'S

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

The Regional Municipality of York is located in the heart of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). It is one of six regional governments in Ontario and covers a total area of almost 1,800 square kilometres. It stretches from Steeles Avenue in the south to Lake Simcoe and the Holland Marsh in the north. In 2006, York Region's population was 892,712.²

Between 2001 and 2006, York Region was the fastest growing census division in Ontario and the third fastest growing in Canada.³ As of February 2011, York Region has a total estimated population of 1,065,159.⁴

Immigration is driving growth and diversity in York Region

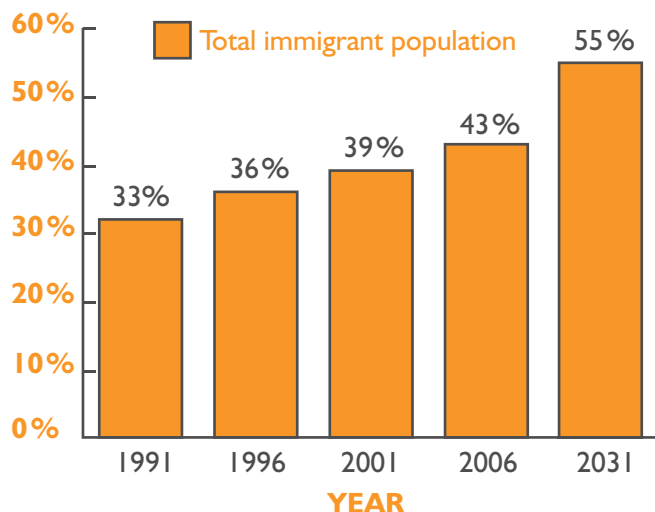
- In 2006, about 43 per cent of York Region's residents were born outside of Canada.⁵ About 46,000 newcomers arrived in York Region between 2001 and 2006; this is the third-largest newcomer population in Ontario.⁶ On average, 10,000 – 12,000 newcomers land in York Region each year.⁷ A detailed look at the socio-economic profile of newcomers living in York Region is provided in the report, *Changing Landscapes: Recent Immigrants Living in York Region*.

- By 2031, York Region's population will be 1.5 million and immigrants will account for more than half (55 per cent) of York Region's total population.⁹
- Between 2001 and 2009, York Region saw a seven per cent increase in the number of immigrants directly landing from their country of origin, whereas Toronto saw a decrease of 27 per cent in the same period.¹⁰

Who are the newcomers living in York Region?

- Newcomers come to York Region from all over the world. In 2006, the top five places of birth of newcomers were China (19 per cent), India (nine per cent), Iran (nine per cent), South Korea (seven per cent), and Russia (six per cent)¹¹. This diversity enriches our culture and adds to the quality of life. Newcomers from different parts of the world also bring with them their knowledge, networks and connections. This can be a window of opportunities for York Region to reach global markets.

Share of Immigrant Population
in York Region, 1991 - 2031⁸



It is projected that over the next 20 years, York Region will see a drop in labour force replacement ratio from above 1.0 to below 1.0, meaning a long-term labour force contraction. In light of this, putting in place services and supports and removing barriers to ensure the rapid and early integration of immigrants will be paramount to maintaining a strong economy in York Region.

~ Economic Analysis of Human Services Costs to 2031: Recommendations for Enhancing Human Services Planning in the Regional Municipality of York, 2010

- Newcomers arriving in York Region are highly educated. About 50 per cent have a certificate, diploma, bachelor's degree or higher.¹² As the economy becomes more knowledge-based, a highly-educated immigrant population will be a strong asset. It will help maintain a vibrant local economy and provide York Region with a global competitive advantage.

- The ability to speak English impacts all aspects of integration and access to services. The percentage of newcomers who had no ability to communicate in either official language increased from 11 per cent in 2001 to 14 per cent in 2006.¹³ This issue requires a balanced response: make English language training available and accessible to as many newcomers while, at the same time, provide appropriate interpretation services to increase access to information and prevent further social isolation and vulnerability.
- In 2006, 98 per cent of York Region's newcomers lived in Markham, Richmond Hill, Vaughan, Newmarket and Aurora.¹⁴ In 2011, Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan have the higher concentration of newcomers.

Fact: In York Region, the most common non-official languages spoken by newcomers at home are:¹⁵

- Chinese
- Russian
- Persian (Farsi)
- Korean
- Tamil

~ 2006 Census, Statistics Canada

- The landscape and the social fabric of York Region are changing. These demographic shifts and settlement trends bring different opportunities and challenges to York Region. They have important implications for the Region in future infrastructure planning, service delivery and creating a welcoming and inclusive community.

Need to strengthen community capacity to support rapid growth

The recent growth in population and diversity brings many opportunities for revitalizing neighbourhoods, building culturally rich communities, and developing a vibrant economy. However, such rapid growth brings challenges as well. The community needs to be able to proactively plan and develop physical and social infrastructure for this growth to be healthy.

The findings of the community consultation showed that many organizations' capacity does not meet current needs. Funding formulas and criteria for some federal and provincial programs have changed. As a result, organizations find it difficult to keep pace with the growing need. Many organizations struggle because they cannot plan proactively for growth. Recent funding cuts to the settlement sector in Ontario may further affect these organizations' capacity to serve newcomers.

Newcomers bring many assets, opportunities and, more importantly, a determination to succeed in their new communities. When newcomers are supported by a welcoming and inclusive community, they are able to participate, contribute and enhance the quality of life for all residents in York Region.



"We recognize that when people are valued, they are willing, empowered, motivated, and tend to contribute to the community."

~ Interview Participant, Community Consultations for the Immigration Settlement Strategy

NEWCOMERS

LIVING IN YORK REGION HAVE ACCESS TO UNIQUE SETTLEMENT PROGRAMS

A range of programs and services are provided by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) to support the successful integration of newcomers.

MCI develops provincial policies and programs to support the integration of newcomers into Ontario. These include: programs such as the Provincial Nominee Program, Newcomer Settlement Program, Language Interpreter Services Program, Bridge training programs, and the Municipal Immigration Information Online Program; an information gateway at www.OntarioImmigration.ca; and the *Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act (2006)*.

CIC provides funding to service provider organizations to deliver programs and services to support the integration of newcomers through the following program streams: Information and Awareness Services; Language Learning and Skills Development; Employment-related Services; Community Connections; Needs Assessments and Referrals; and Support Services.

The following are some additional examples of more specific and recent developments in York Region.

Welcome Centres

Welcome Centres are one-stop, multi-service centres where immigrants and newcomers can access a number of services under one roof. These include settlement and integration services, language training, accreditation and qualifications assistance, and employment supports. Welcome Centres are located in Markham, Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Newmarket. The Centres also offer “hoteling” services for community groups. There is also a mobile unit that travels across the region. This hub model for newcomer services began in York Region and is a promising practice.

NOW (Newcomer Orientation Week) Program

Newcomer Orientation Week (NOW) is a one-week orientation program geared towards newly-arrived high school students and ESL Grade 9 students. The week is intended to help them adapt more easily to their new

school system. In the program, students learn from other students, make friends, and are empowered to begin the school year from a position of strength.

Learn, Speak, Live

Through the Learn, Speak, Live public information campaign, newcomers can learn about available English classes in their community. Newcomers can choose a language program offered by community agencies or school boards. These include: Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, Enhanced Language Training (ELT), and Home Study. This kind of campaign was started in York Region and is a promising practice.

Immigrant Information Services

This organization provides customized training and networking opportunities for settlement staff, manages an Information Warehouse and Distribution Centre and publishes Immigrant Connections (resource tool).

The Immigrant Youth Centre (IYC)

The Immigrant Youth Centre (IYC) opened in September, 2009 in Markham and is the first facility in York Region dedicated to serving new immigrants aged 13 to 24. The IYC is committed to enhancing immigrant youths’ sense of community in an inclusive, supportive and diverse environment. At the IYC, newcomer youth can find resources to help settle into their new home. The centre has a drop-in lounge, computer lab, audio/visual studio, multipurpose room for workshops and seminars, full kitchen, and a job board.

What we have: York Region Immigration Portal
www.yorkwelcome.ca

This is a one-stop community-based website for newcomers and anyone who is new to York Region. It provides information about local government services, community programs, services and supports. Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration provided funding to develop the portal.

COMMUNITY

RESULTS AND PRIORITIES

Successful integration is defined as “the ability to contribute, free of barriers, to every dimension of Canadian life – economic, social, cultural and political”.

“Integration is a two-way street whereby the community has a role to play in welcoming newcomers and assisting with settlement and longer-term integration and the newcomer is responsible to strive to participate and contribute to Canadian life.”

~ Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Fundamental to the York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy has been developing an understanding of what successful integration translates to in real life – based on consultations, research and discussions with the CPC members. We have defined five community results of the Strategy based on this understanding. For each of the five community results, we have then crafted a set of priority actions to guide a three-year action plan.

Community Results for the York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy



Community Result:

York Region is a community that is WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE

A community that openly receives newcomers promotes social equity and is cohesive. It is a community that understands the needs of newcomers and facilitates their full participation in all aspects of community life, the economy and Canadian society.

The Current Experience

Newcomers are facing multiple barriers to accessing services. These barriers include language, eligibility requirements, transportation, location of services and costs. Community acceptance and stereotypes are factors that impact newcomers' sense of belonging, their ability to participate and full integration.

In York Region, informal supports (i.e. family and friends) and mainstream organizations and formal settlement services are all key players in the integration of newcomers. Across all sectors, organizations struggle to keep up with service needs.

Priorities to guide a three-year action plan

- Support the continued development of the community hub model (i.e. Welcome Centres) and the York Region Immigration Portal
- Build community capacity to be welcoming, inclusive and equitable through providing adequate resources, fostering partnerships and promoting community awareness and acceptance
- Continue and improve collaboration and knowledge sharing across sectors and different levels of governments
- Improve accessibility and awareness of programs, and supports to address social isolation and labour market access
- Address issues related to language barriers and its impact on all areas of integration

“Accessibility, inclusion, respect for the individual and cultural sensitivity essentially involve offering programs that address the diverse needs and perspectives of immigrants”.

~ *From Immigration to Participation: A Report on Promising Practices in Integration, 2008*

SUPPORTING DATA

Approximately 10,000 – 12,000 newcomers land directly in York Region each year.¹⁶ Immigrants landing directly in York Region increased by seven per cent between 2001 and 2009 representing approximately 33 per cent of York Region's growth.¹⁷

Language:

- In 2001, 11 per cent of newcomers had no knowledge of English or French; in 2006 this increased to 14 per cent.¹⁸

Public transit use:

- In 2001, 18 per cent of newcomers used public transit to get to work; in 2006, this increased to 20 per cent.¹⁹

Community capacity:

- 44 per cent of surveyed organization newcomers said that newcomers' needs exceeded capacity of their programs/services.²⁰

Community attitude:

- 55 per cent of Ontario residents feel that immigration is having a negative effect on their community. Only Alberta is higher at 56 per cent.²¹

What we have: Community Alliance for York Region Education

This is an after-school hockey program teaching low income and newcomer children Canada's national game. It is the only opportunity of its kind that strengthens ties to the community and school for the entire family.

What we have: Family Resource Centre

The Family Resource Centre provides newcomers and low income families with programs that facilitate settlement and reduce isolation, create linkages and encourage healthy child development.

What we have: Latin Women for a Better Future program

This is an informal group of women who speak Spanish. They support each other as they adjust to life, employment, education and individual development, family and community in their new home — York Region.

Community Result: Newcomers are **ECONOMICALLY INTEGRATED**

Newcomers strive and are succeeding in the labour market, have jobs that match their skills and education, are living in affordable, stable and safe housing and have a liveable household income. Newcomers help meet labour market shortages and keep York Region economically competitive.

The Current Experience

Highly educated newcomers are often under-employed or work in multiple jobs. As a result, many newcomers live in low income households, are losing their skills and have been hardest hit by the last recession. Prolonged under or unemployment can lead to loss of skills which seriously affects an individual's prospects of re-entering a profession. This has a major impact on our local economy and our ability to remain competitive.

Priorities to guide a three-year action plan

- Work with employers to hire newcomers
- Facilitate newcomers' understanding and learning of the "Canadian work culture"
- Support successful "first job in Canada" experiences
- Support newcomer entrepreneurs
- Offer better support for the accreditation process
- Improve quantity and quality of affordable, safe and stable housing

"Access to housing is key to a newcomer's sense of stability, providing the base for enrolling children into school, beginning job search, and connecting to the community."

~ *An Immigration Strategy: The Municipal Perspective, 2009*

What we have: Welcome Kit for Newcomers Canadian Entrepreneurs

Supported by public and corporate sponsors, the kit includes brochures, fact sheets, and information on both government and corporate services and supports available to newcomers in the — York Region.

SUPPORTING DATA

Employment:

- In 2006, 60 per cent of York Region's newcomers and 37 per cent of residents born in Canada who had a university degree worked in jobs requiring less than university degree.²²
- In Toronto CMA, newcomers had approximately 35,000 net job losses. Canadian-born residents had a net job gain of approximately 4,700.²³
- As of October 2010, the unemployment rate for newcomers in Ontario was 21.2 per cent compared to 7.8 per cent for Canadian-born residents.²⁴

Income of newcomers in York Region:

- It takes 15 years before an immigrant has close to the income as a Canadian-born resident.²⁵
- The low income rate for newcomers in York Region is increasing. In 2001, 27 per cent of newcomers were below the low income cut-off and in 2006 it was 32 per cent; whereas in 2006 it was seven per cent for Canadian-born residents.²⁶

Housing affordability in York Region:

- In 2006, 35 per cent of newcomer homeowners and eight per cent of Canadian-born residents in York Region spent 50 per cent, or more, of their gross income on housing.²⁷

Employers in York Region:

- Employers will soon experience labour shortages due to the aging workforce. 25 percent of the workforce will retire in the next five to ten years.²⁸
- 50 per cent of survey respondents rate York Region employers as either fair or poor at utilizing the skills and knowledge of newcomers.²⁹

What we have: Maintenance Electro Mechanic Program (MEME)

This 18-week program will enable internationally-trained electricians in York Region to receive hands-on training, exam and employment preparation, a Certification of Qualification and full-time employment.

What we have: Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC)

TRIEC can help employers find and use resources and immigrant employment organizations for recruitment, integration, training or leadership and recognition opportunities.

Community Result: Newcomers are **SOCIALLY INTEGRATED**

Newcomers connect with the community and feel included, valued and positively linked to the people, places and things within and outside their communities. Newcomers feel safe and are living healthy lives.

The Current Experience

Newcomers, particularly those in immigrant priority groups (women, youth and seniors), face issues of social isolation and loneliness when they move to Canada. Newcomers face unique challenges and have special needs in terms of physical and mental health.

Members of immigrant priority groups, particularly seniors, are often unaware of their rights, or of the cultural and legal norms in Canada. This increases their overall vulnerability and is particularly true for those who are not able to communicate in English.

Priorities to guide a three-year action plan

- Meet the individual needs of newcomers and provide a continuum of supports
- Help newcomers to be connected and live in safe communities
- Address mental health challenges of newcomers.
- Help newcomers become actively involved in their local community or neighbourhood
- Ensure newcomer women have dedicated social support programs focussed on their needs
- Help newcomer seniors become aware of and access supports and services available to them
- Help newcomer youth feel welcome and receive the support they need to excel

“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 related to the integration of immigrant women”.

~ *Integration Outcomes for Immigrant Women in Canada: A Review of the Literature 2000-2007, 2007*

SUPPORTING DATA

Feeling at home in York Region:³⁰

- 26 per cent of newcomers feel either sometimes, rarely or never at home in their community.
- Within the initial months of landing, 52 per cent of newcomers “always” feel at home. After being here three to five years, this drops to 42 per cent.
- For newcomers, the top three reasons to live in York Region are to be close to family, close to school and to be in a good living environment.

Health and well-being:

- Across Canada, newcomers experience a deterioration of their health after landing in Canada.³¹

Community involvement:

- Across Canada, newcomers were more likely than the Canadian-born to become inactive in leisure time.³²

“Youth are the future of Canada, if we lose our youth, we lose a piece of Canada.”

~ *Service Provider, Community consultations for the Immigration Settlement Strategy*

What we have: South Asian Adult Day Program, Social Services Network

Program provides South Asian seniors safe access to information and activities on prevention and wellness philosophies in six languages.

What we have: Life with a Baby, Healthy Start, Healthy Future

The agency provides free, multi-lingual, peer-based support to new and expectant parents through workshops, parenting programs, community social events and online support.

What we have: Bridge Group for Women, Catholic Community Services of York Region

A program to help women from diverse communities build self-esteem, increase assertiveness, build stronger relationships, reduce isolation and cope constructively with transition.

Community Result: Newcomers are **CULTURALLY INTEGRATED**

Newcomers have and seize opportunities to be actively engaged, feel part of Canadian culture and understand Canadian values. Newcomers can practice and share their own culture and learn about and interact with other cultures. Newcomers understand the social and cultural norms of various cultures and are able to practice them appropriately.

The Current Experience

Newcomers who have the same ethnic origin tend to live in the same communities. However newcomers have said they want to learn, experience and live with other cultures.

The dominance of particular ethnic groups in communities and neighbourhoods reduces opportunities for newcomers to interact with other cultures and learn and understand each other. It is challenging to build rapport with others outside a cultural community while living in an enclave. Many newcomers did not feel understood by other communities. Adjusting to cultural integration is a significant part of the settlement and integration process.

Priorities to guide a three-year action plan

- Build awareness and respect amongst cultures
- Increase access to shared and public space, where ethno-cultural communities can gather, celebrate cultures and learn from each other
- Promote cross-cultural interactions and diversity through arts/media/recreation
- Nurture and celebrate diversity and the multicultural identity of York Region

“I feel like I lost myself when I came to Canada.”

~ *Woman Newcomer Focus Group Participant,
Community consultations for the Immigration
Settlement Strategy*

What we have: Mentoring Across Ages and Cultures, Big Brothers Big Sisters of York

Recent immigrants and low-income children are helped to adapt to a new environment by mentors who can relate culturally and speak the same language.

SUPPORTING DATA

Ethnic group concentrations:

Cultural groups tend to live in the same community. We can see the pattern through identifying the most common places of birth for newcomers in the following local municipalities:³³

- Aurora – South Korea (10 per cent)
- Markham – China (34 per cent)
- Newmarket – China (13 per cent)
- Richmond Hill – Iran (22 per cent)
- Vaughan – Russian Federation (11 per cent)

Cross-cultural understanding/awareness:

The Community Survey identified the following requirements for new immigrants and long-term residents to live together successfully:³⁴

- New immigrants need to become actively involved in their community (ranked highest by 57 per cent of respondents)
- Both new immigrants and long-term residents need to learn about each other's cultures was ranked the second highest (55 per cent of respondents)
- Communities need to understand and celebrate diversity (third highest at 39 per cent of respondents)
- The Francophone immigrant community in York Region is small, spread-out and diverse and come from many different countries. This makes connecting with each other difficult.

What we have: Focus on Fathers Multicultural Family Program, Catholic Community Services of York Region

This program provides region-wide supports for multicultural families. It offers parenting classes in several languages for fathers, parents and grandparents, new and expecting parents, and parents of teenagers.

What we have: Peace Tree Day

Peace Tree Day is celebrated in York Region on the first of June every year. The event promotes intercultural awareness while celebrating the diversity of our communities.

Community Result: Newcomers are **CIVICALLY AND POLITICALLY INTEGRATED**

Newcomers understand, can access and trust the Canadian government, policing services and the political and justice systems. Newcomers take active roles in community building and take leadership roles within organizations and institutions.

The Current Experience

Some newcomers come from countries where the leadership and political system is very different than in Canada. Their comfort level for wanting to get involved in communities varies depending on a number of factors: their past experiences in their homeland, language skills, trust and familiarity with the Canadian system and time/resource constraints.

Being involved in the community through volunteering promotes social cohesion and a sense of belonging. At the same time, it helps newcomers gain Canadian experience; learn soft skills and language needed to succeed in Canada. It demonstrates to the broader community that newcomers are partners in community building. However, the challenges mentioned above sometimes make it difficult for newcomers to participate and become active in their community.

Priorities to guide a three-year action plan

- Promote and monitor diversity for leadership roles in organizations and institutions
- Increase newcomers' opportunities to build their skills and increase learning through volunteering
- Help newcomers understand their rights and responsibilities so they can become actively engaged and civic-minded residents of Canada
- Ensure organizations commit and practice values of equity and diversity
- Strengthen relationships between newcomer communities and policing services, justice, government and political systems

SUPPORTING DATA

Citizenship:

- In 2001, 30 per cent of newcomers became Canadian citizens; in 2006, this dropped to 25 per cent³⁵

Voter turn-out rate:

Across Canada, ridings with high concentrations of immigrants (who are Canadian citizens) had lower than average rates of voter participation in the past federal elections.

- In 2004, voting rate in Ontario was 59 per cent; in Markham-Unionville riding it was 56 per cent; in 2006, voting rate in Ontario was 64 per cent and in Markham-Unionville it was 62 per cent³⁶

Rights and responsibilities as a resident of Canada:

*According to the Community Survey for the Immigration Settlement Strategy:*³⁷

- 16 per cent of respondents said understanding the legal system and their rights and responsibilities as a Canadian citizen is one of the top needs for newcomers.
- 28 per cent of respondents said access to information about the legal system and rights and responsibilities will help with newcomers and long term residents living together successfully.

Diverse leadership/representation:

In 2010, in the GTA, only 14 per cent of community leaders were visible minorities, when visible minorities make up about 40 per cent of the population in 2006.³⁸

"Diversity brings added value to organizations and to society as it allows us to tap into and benefit from broader perspectives, experiences, networks and knowledge."

~ *Diversity Matters: Changing the Face of Public Boards, Maytree Foundation, 2009*

What we have: York Regional Police – Diversity and Cultural Resources Bureau

This special bureau focuses on relationship building and community development and is responsible for all areas of Diversity, Hate Crime, Police Chaplaincy, and Specialized Training.

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

A key building block in implementing the York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy is the recognition that success depends on collaborative efforts, strong partnerships and commitment to actions from the entire community.

The CPC, which brings together multi-sectoral representatives, will be instrumental in the implementation of the Strategy and in advancing its community results. To build healthy and vibrant communities and maximize the benefits of immigration, it is important that newcomers are economically, socially, culturally and civically/politically integrated. For this to occur successfully, the community — including each of the stakeholders — has a role in providing a welcoming and inclusive environment.



“Communities that enjoy the most success are those that engage all sectors”.

~ An Immigration Strategy: The Municipal Perspective, 2009

DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

Action Planning

- *Indicator Development*
- *Identifying Partners*
- *Community Engagement*
- *Identifying Opportunities*

Three Years

*Collective Actions
by CPC*

*Community
Initiatives*

Progress Report

- *Measuring Indicators*
- *Measuring Effects of Programs and Services*
- *Accomplishments*
- *Understanding Newcomer Perspectives*



Making a difference in the community

A three-year action plan will be developed, which will identify those actions with the best chance of improving community results. The plan will take an asset-based approach, harnessing the energy and assets of the community and building on what's already working. This planning process will include:

- developing indicators that will help identify progress;
- identifying partners, in addition to CPC members, who can contribute;
- identifying funding opportunities and exploring the roles of funders in supporting the integration of newcomers beyond the initial stage of settlement to help build capacity in York Region; and
- promoting community engagement and outreach to the broader community, mainstream organizations, agencies and groups including not-for-profit, universities and colleges, government and business sectors.

The CPC will identify one or two collective actions that the CPC will focus on over three years. The broader community will also be consulted to see how it can contribute to the community results.



Indicators will help determine course of action

Indicators, both qualitative and quantitative, measure progress in moving toward a desired state. They also help steer decisions and can suggest alternatives if necessary. The table below highlights the indicator areas for each community result. They will drive the implementation of the three-year action plan.

A baseline for each indicator area will be established. These will provide us with a current trend in York Region. The CPC will then identify measures to flatten the trend, slow the trend or turn the trend in a more positive direction.

COMMUNITY RESULTS INDICATOR AREAS

Newcomers are economically integrated

- Workforce development
- Financial stability
- Economic contribution

Newcomers are socially integrated

- Safety and security
- Social connections
- Health and wellness

Newcomers are culturally integrated

- Cross-cultural understanding and respect
- Cultural celebrations
- Participation of newcomers in community arts, cultural, recreational and leisure activities

Newcomers are civically and politically integrated

- Newcomers' awareness and understanding of their rights and responsibilities
- Newcomers' understanding, connectedness and trust in police services, government services, and the political and justice systems
- Newcomers' involvement/participation in leadership roles

A community that is welcoming and inclusive

- Community attitude towards newcomers
- Community support for newcomers and the organizations that support them
- Community support for diversity and cultural inclusion



its implementation or the achievement of the community results. All community stakeholders have a part to play in this process.

The CPC is committed to a leadership role in: creating awareness in the community about the importance of integrating newcomers; and developing collaborative contributions from all stakeholders to advance the community results of the Strategy. This will require outreach to build awareness, facilitate and coordinate new partnerships and identify effective actions. CPC members will play a critical role in leveraging partnerships and linkages in their sectors.

Outreach will engage the broader community including mainstream organizations, the business sector, post-secondary institutions, various levels of government, settlement agencies, not-for profit organizations, and community groups.

Understanding the unique needs of immigrant priority groups

Further research will be done to understand the unique needs, challenges and contributions of the immigrant priority groups (women, senior, youth and the Francophone community) living in York Region. Using both qualitative and quantitative data, this research will support the strategic priorities, inform the development of services and programs, and support successful integration of these priority immigrant groups.

Engagement of the broader community is fundamental to success

The York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy is a community plan founded on shared responsibility and community leadership. This means that no one organization or stakeholder is solely responsible for either

Monitoring progress and reporting

After three years, the CPC will report on progress in advancing the community results. This progress report will: use the indicators and their baseline measures to assess how the community is doing in terms of “turning the curve”; examine the effects of programs and services on newcomers and assess if they are making a difference towards the community results; and highlight what we’ve accomplished over three years. We will revisit the action plan at that time and identify any changes or improvements.

Moving forward: Strengthening our community together

Successful integration is a two-way street. It requires the strength and commitment of newcomers and the community stakeholders and long-term residents of York Region. The York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy provides a foundation for building a strong, welcoming and inclusive community that supports newcomer integration and enhances the quality of life for all residents. This is a community plan developed in partnership with community organizations, newcomers, long-term residents of York Region and all levels of government. It will be these partnerships that will take this Strategy from talk to action. It will guide the successful integration of newcomers living in our communities.

NEXT STEPS

STEPS AND INITIAL SUCCESSES RESULTING FROM THE STRATEGY



The proposed next steps will begin with a community launch of the Strategy in the Fall of 2011. The launch event will be a forum that allows for innovation through dialogues and discussions for moving the Strategy to creating meaningful actions and solutions.

The Region in collaboration with the CPC will be developing actions as initial successes of the Strategy including:

- Releasing profiles on the immigrant priority groups (Women, Youth, Seniors and the Francophone community) for service planning and increase understanding of the unique needs of these groups.
- Maximizing the use of York Region Immigration Portal to provide current and relevant information to newcomers and the organizations that support them. The Portal would serve as an on-line hub for sharing knowledge and hosting research and planning documents created by community organizations.
- Exploring new partnerships and the creation of a funders table that will help identify and guide community investments and resource allocations to achieve effective community results in York Region.
- Exploring an International Educated Professional conference, which if funding is secured, would involve a one-day conference that connects levels of government, professional associations, employers and newcomers together to network and learn about the Canadian work place.
- Establishing a Municipal Diversity Reference Group that would build on existing diversity/race relations initiatives in local municipalities and would provide a forum for them to engage in collaborative planning, discuss common needs, identify possible tools for other municipalities and best practices. It can also act as a vehicle for public education and awareness in York Region. The Municipal Diversity Reference Group would work closely with the York Regional Police's Diversity and Cultural Resources Bureau and be coordinated through the Region.

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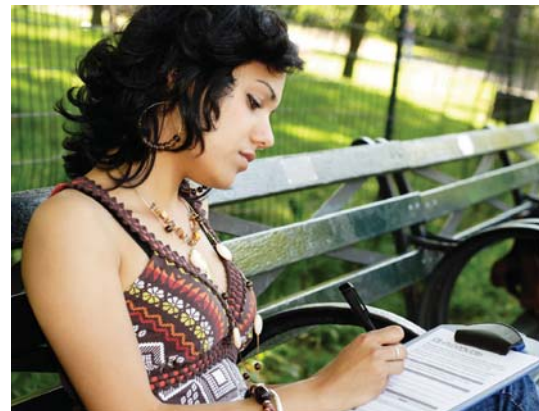
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LEADING CHANGE FOR A STRONGER COMMUNITY

YORK REGION LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP: CONSULTATION & LITERATURE REVIEW

SEPTEMBER 2011



DRAFT

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The Consultation and Literature Review was developed and designed by staff of the Strategic Service Integration and Policy Branch, Community and Health Services Department.

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides a summary of results from consultations conducted in 2010 for York Region's Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) initiative. The findings outlined in this report help identify current issues, priorities and possible solutions for the successful integration of newcomers living in York Region. The report also examines the needs of community stakeholders who play a critical role in the "pathways" to integration. These include settlement agencies, mainstream organizations and employers. The information gathered from the consultations has been used to shape the community results and priorities of the York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy.

Through the LIP initiative, York Regional Council created the Community Partnership Council (CPC) and appointed its members. The CPC is a group of community stakeholders, from different sectors, who worked collaboratively with the Region to develop a York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy. The Strategy will guide the growth of York Region communities so that community organizations, all levels of government and employers can adapt to the changing demographic and economic environment.

In total, the consultation process engaged about 2,000 stakeholders including newcomers, long-term residents, community leaders; and representatives of organizations, agencies and groups, local municipalities, employer networks and planning tables. A more detailed methodology of the consultations is in the Background section of this report.

The consultations focused primarily on the needs of newcomers, defined as those who have landed in Canada within the last five years, in terms of social, economic, political and cultural integration, as well as the needs of those organizations that support them. In addition, consultations also gathered information on the four immigrant priority groups (women, youth, seniors, Francophones) as identified by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

In addition to the consultations, a literature review was conducted to identify trends, patterns and best practices in settlement and integration in Canada. The literature review helped place the consultation findings in the broader context of the experience of immigrants across Canada. The literature review also helped enhance and explain some of the key findings.

This report is based on the perspectives of the consultation participants and is informed by the literature review. The findings are pieces of the puzzle that help to tell the story of newcomers living in York Region. They combine in this report to serve as the basis for the York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy. The community will continue to have an opportunity to shape the next phase of the Strategy as we move from "talk to action".

"The strength and resiliency of a community is very much linked to the inclusion and engagement of individuals, community and organizations in community life."

~ York Region Sustainability Strategy, 2007

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following table summarizes the major themes and key findings across all of the consultations. Each of these themes and findings is explored in further detail throughout the report.

Emerging Themes	Key Findings
Service Use and Accessibility	1. Culturally appropriate and responsive programs are required to meet settlement needs 2. Services in one location support successful integration by meeting multiple needs of newcomers 3. Newcomers rely on informal supports but don't always get current information 4. Gaps exist between newcomer needs and available services 5. Mentorship programs and volunteering help meet multiple integration needs 6. Service systems can be overwhelming for newcomers 7. Eligibility restrictions and citizenship limit access to newcomer supports 8. Geographic location of services and transportation affect service accessibility 9. A lack of affordable child care affects social and economic participation 10. Flexible hours would improve access to supports and services
Awareness and Need for Information	1. Many newcomers are not aware of available supports and services 2. Outreach is effective in places where newcomers already gather 3. More effective delivery of information is needed upon arrival 4. Need for more effective information sharing between front-line staff 5. Lack of awareness of supports for those who are socially isolated increases their vulnerability
Social Inclusion	1. It takes up to 15 years to integrate socially and economically 2. Lack of time and cost can be barriers to community participation 3. More opportunities are needed for newcomers and long-term residents to interact 4. A lack of familiarity with Canadian norms is a challenge to integration and inclusion
Language Needs	1. Language impacts all aspects of a newcomer's ability to settle and integrate 2. Language classes need to provide consistent information and address workplace needs 3. Need for more coordinated, better quality, and cost-effective interpretation and translation
Organizational Capacity	1. Funding and pace of growth impact organizational capacity 2. Mainstream organizations face capacity challenges because of broader mandates 3. Funding structure limits ability to strategically anticipate needs 4. Organizational capacity should be built using inclusive practices and having a diverse workforce
Collaboration and Partnerships	1. Partnership increases capacity and has potential for knowledge sharing and growth 2. A good foundation for collaboration exists in York Region 3. Meaningful partnerships require time and resources 4. More information and knowledge sharing are needed across sectors

Funding and Government Policy	1. Funding systems make service planning challenging 2. All levels of government have important roles in supporting the settlement and integration of newcomers 3. Funding disparities for settlement services continue to exist between other GTA municipalities and York Region
Welcoming Communities	1. A sense of community is grounded in social connection 2. More education is needed about the benefits newcomers bring to communities 3. Community attitude is a significant factor in creating welcoming communities 4. Living in own cultural community has benefits but narrowed social networks can delay integration
Employment	1. Newcomers need support for soft skill development, networking and accreditation 2. Newcomer entrepreneurs contribute to our economy but need support to succeed 3. Lack of “Canadian Experience” is a barrier for employment 4. Unemployment and underemployment result in loss of skills for newcomers 5. Mentorship and bridging programs are helpful, but there is limited availability in York Region
Employers’ Needs	1. Need for more employer education on benefits of hiring newcomers 2. Small and medium-sized businesses have distinct challenges and opportunities in supporting newcomers 3. Employers need more opportunities to coordinate, share information, and connect to potential talent pools
Health	1. Access to health care is challenging because of health services gaps 2. Immigrants’ health deteriorates over time 3. Mental health is increasingly an issue for newcomers
Housing	1. Lack of affordable housing in York Region contributes to unstable housing situations 2. Settlement supports need to offer support in finding housing 3. Newcomers need more education about tenants’ rights
Women	1. Women face the biggest gaps in programs and services 2. The caregiver role in the family highlights need for child care supports 3. Finding employment is a greater challenge for women 4. Domestic violence further isolates newcomer women
Youth	1. Youth need afterschool programs, peer support groups and safe “hang out” spots 2. Youth have an easier time settling and integrating than their parents 3. Process of integration leads to inter-generational conflict 4. Making friends can be challenging for youth 5. Need to address language and cultural barriers at school
Seniors	1. Seniors are at high risk of facing social isolation 2. Health is a significant and growing challenge for newcomer seniors 3. Social and financial independence are significant issues for seniors 4. Changing family duties has mixed impact on seniors
Francophones	1. Need for language appropriate services 2. Dispersion of Francophone residents in York Region leads to challenges connecting with other Francophones

BACKGROUND

York Region is the fastest growing census division in Ontario. In 2006, York Region was home to more than 380,500 immigrants, 43 per cent of the population of York Region.¹ Since 2006, York Region has grown by nearly 126,000 new residents and is home to over one million residents.² On average, York Region receives about 10,000 to 12,000 newcomers per year, representing approximately 32 per cent of York Region's growth.³

The Regional Municipality of York was selected by Citizenship and Immigration Canada to lead the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) initiative. The purpose of the initiative is to better coordinate the activities of agencies that support newcomers, improve newcomers' labour market outcomes and increase York Region's capacity to be welcoming and inclusive. As part of the LIP project, the Region established the Community Partnership Council (CPC) to develop a "made-in-York-Region" Immigration Settlement Strategy.

In order to develop a holistic Immigration Settlement Strategy for York Region, the Region and the CPC embarked on extensive community consultations. The consultations sought out the voices of newcomers, long-term residents of York Region and community stakeholders from all sectors.

The consultation process was multi-faceted and inclusive

A variety of consultation strategies were used including a Survey of New Immigrant Supports in York Region, a York Region Newcomer Survey, a Community Survey, focus groups and key informant interviews.

The consultations took place between May and December 2010. They were designed as a progressive process so the findings of one stage of could inform the next. For example, the focus group guides/questions were developed, in part, based on the findings from the surveys of New Immigrant Supports in York Region and the York Region Newcomer Survey. This progressive approach has provided information about community needs that is more meaningful and more extensive. A common trend in the consultation results was the significant variations in responses based on linguistic and ethno-cultural groups as well as some variations around gender, age, and geography.

The various consultation approaches are highlighted below:

Consultation Approach	Description
<i>Survey of New Immigrant Supports in York Region</i>	A web-based survey that asked for input from: • formal settlement supports that promote newcomer integration primarily funded by CIC or MCI • informal mainstream supports to newcomers – such as community agencies, organizations and groups that have newcomers using their service • Results: 253 responses from both settlement and language programs, organizations, agencies and groups that provide informal support.
<i>Newcomer Survey</i>	Face-to-face interviews with newcomers by newcomers: • Aimed at newcomers to allow them to voice their needs and challenges about the settlement and integration processes. • Newcomers were hired to conduct face to face interviews with other immigrants in their own language. • Results: 719 surveys were conducted in 10 languages

¹ Statistics Canada, Census 2006

² Planning and Development Services Department, population estimate, October 2010

³ Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Landing Data

Focus Groups

Twelve focus groups were conducted with newcomers, and community stakeholders that play a role in the successful integration of newcomers. These included:

- settlement services and language workers
- providers of social and health services
- providers of social housing
- community recreation and arts groups
- faith based and cultural groups
- representatives from local municipalities
- recent immigrant women, seniors, youth and Francophones.
- employer networks and planning tables

Key Informant Interviews

Five interviews were conducted with key community stakeholders who have expertise and play a significant role in supporting immigrant integration. These included stakeholders from:

- Central Local Health Information Network
- York University
- York Regional Police
- Community Legal Clinic of York Region
- Seneca College

Community Survey

A web-based survey in seven languages geared to residents of York Region:

- Questions focused on creating welcoming and inclusive communities in York Region.
- The survey was promoted at five locations: Richmond Hill Welcome Centre, Vaughan Community Health Centre, Vaughan Mills Mall, Immigrant Youth Centre in Markham, and the Mission Catholique Sainte Frère André in Aurora. It was also advertised in ethnic newspapers and by media release.
- Results: 470 surveys were completed in five languages



Literature Review

In addition to the consultations, a literature review was conducted in identifying trends, patterns and best practices in settlement and integration in Canada. About 60 documents of research studies and other jurisdictional immigration plans were reviewed. This extensive review helped to augment our understanding on local immigration planning and best practices of how other communities are proactively planning and maximizing immigrant potential to improve their communities' quality of life. The literature review helped place the York Region consultation findings in the broader context of the experience of immigrants across Canada. The literature contributed to enhancing and explaining some of the key findings.

KEY FINDINGS

York Region is rapidly changing and becoming more diverse. As a community with one of the fastest growing immigrant populations in Canada, participants all agreed that it is important to understand and work with newcomers.

The following sections summarize the major issues for newcomers living in York Region. These findings are based on the consultation findings and the literature review.



“When we look at the wonderful aspects of diversity, at the base of it is a better understanding of human rights.”

~ Interview Participant

Service use and accessibility

Key Finding 1: Culturally appropriate and responsive programs are needed to meet settlement needs

“It’s important to have strong community partnerships and relationships; gives community confidence and trust.”

~ Interview Participant

York Region needs more client-centred services that are culturally appropriate, responsive to individual needs, yet also able to meet the multiple needs of some clients, particularly women and seniors. If newcomers have access to supports that better respond to their needs, the integration process will be more successful. Such access creates trust between clients and service providers, increases accessibility and is more effective at engaging particular immigrant groups. The report *From Immigration to Participation: A Report on Promising Practices in Integration, 2008* underscores the need for approaches which recognize integration involves many other aspects of settlement beyond programs and services, including empowering and enabling newcomers to contribute to the community.

Key Finding 2: Services in one location support successful integration by meeting multiple needs of newcomers

Complete and client-centred services are better delivered in one location such as a multi-service centre. When services are combined in this way, newcomers who are referred to a variety of services only need to visit one building. Services hubs create better program awareness and reduce frustration. Newcomers would benefit from further development of existing community hubs in York Region.

“Programs that enhance access to information encompass several dimensions of integration as newcomers require and seek information about employment as well as other aspects of settlement.”

~ Integrating Immigrants: Building Partnerships that Work, 2006

Key Finding 3: Newcomers rely on informal supports but don't always get current information

“Some newcomers don't trust the system – for them the natural tendency is to come to temple because they are comfortable.”

~ Service Provider, Focus Group Participant

Many newcomers rely on informal supports as they settle into a community. Non-primary applicants (who tend to be women, children and seniors) are relatively unfamiliar with Canadian society and its structures. In both surveys and focus groups, newcomers said they became frustrated with formal services because of barriers such as language, culture and eligibility. As a result, they chose to turn to informal supports for help.

There are a number of reasons newcomers seek out support from family, friends or their faith community. They get personal, one-on-one support from someone who speaks their language and understands what they are experiencing. While the importance of family and friends in the process of settlement is nearly universal, faith groups are more helpful for some groups of newcomers than others. Informal support networks can lack up-to-date information and comprehensive networks and, as a result, may not offer as effective or informed support.

Key Finding 4: Gaps exist between newcomer needs and available services

A number of service and program gaps were identified throughout the process. It is worth noting that the service gaps were most often in mainstream areas such as employment, education, health and housing. Many of these gaps will be explored in the sections of the document focusing on Employment, Language, Health, Education and Housing. These service gaps reflect the ongoing challenges of responding to changes in immigration and the slow development of new services. These gaps also represent the growing demand in areas where there are limited services.

Key Finding 5: Mentorship programs and volunteering help meet multiple integration needs

“We need ways to meet people, get some experience, and practice our English at the same time.”

~ Newcomer, Survey Participant

Many newcomer participants identified that it would be helpful to have programs that meet multiple integration needs such as learning English, finding supports and services more easily, meeting people from diverse social networks and getting involved in their communities. Mentorship programs and volunteer opportunities such as practice firms were also identified as ways to successfully meet multiple needs by interview and focus group participants and by the report: *An Immigration Strategy: the Municipal Perspective* (2009).

Key Finding 6: Service systems can be overwhelming for newcomers

Navigating the service system can be difficult for newcomers. As a consequence, they can get the wrong information about the appropriate services for their specific needs. It is also challenging to get to multiple service providers at multiple locations. In particular, consultation participants identified challenges with navigating the education, health and legal systems in Canada. These systems are broad and complex. The challenge is compounded by language barriers and lack of familiarity with Canadian systems. The whole process can be intimidating.

“Newcomers can find out better how to get things done through their friends or family networks.”

~ Newcomer, Focus Group Participant

Key Finding 7: Eligibility restrictions and citizenship limit access to newcomer supports

Participants in the York Region Newcomer Survey and the Survey of New Immigrant Supports in York Region identified eligibility as a significant barrier to newcomers accessing services. Eligibility requirements are often tied to restrictions by program funders.

For instance, many newcomers become Canadian citizens as soon as they become eligible – three years after they land in Canada. However, acquiring citizenship means they are no longer eligible for any further settlement services, even though the current data clearly indicates that it takes longer than three years to integrate. This lack of harmonization made it difficult for some newcomers to access the whole continuum of supports that they needed.

Key Finding 8: Geographic location of services and transportation affects service accessibility

“Returning from night classes in Toronto by transit is exceedingly difficult.”

~ Newcomer Survey Participant

York Region is a large geographic area. Many participants in both newcomer and service provider focus groups expressed frustration about how far newcomers must travel to reach services and programs. In the consultation, transportation was identified as an issue for a number of reasons: high costs, lack of bus routes off main streets, long waits for buses and the complexity of five different transit systems (York Region Transit, Mobility Plus, VIVA, Go Transit, and TTC) operating in York Region. While many consultation participants highlighted the benefits

The Transportation Master Plan 2009 for York Region includes proposed transportation improvements including rapid and light transit and fare integration when crossing geographic boundaries.

~ Vision 2026 Sustainability Progress Report, 2009

“Once you become a citizen you can’t use the service anymore... this is confusing.”

~ Newcomer Survey Participant

of multi-service centres such as the Welcome Centre, others suggested that moving more services into one building would lead to more transportation issues. Some focus group participants suggested that satellite locations in neighbourhood schools and mobile services (such as mobile vans that take a suite of services to newcomers in different communities) would help alleviate some

transportation barriers. These findings illustrate the need for a balanced and varied approach to service delivery.

Key Finding 9: A lack of affordable child care affects social and economic participation

Lack of child care is an important barrier to access that affects mostly women and seniors. While child care was named as a barrier to access by only six per cent of York Region Newcomer Survey respondents, focus group participants highlighted that child care can be crucial for mothers and especially working mothers. Currently available day care in York Region is not affordable for many newcomers. As a consequence, many women are unable to participate in programs and in the community. Some newcomer mothers are not accessing services because they have no one to look after their children while they visit the service provider. While some families have seniors living at home that can help with child care duties, other families often need more supports. Child care obligations limit the senior immigrant’s opportunity to participate in their community and socially integrate.

Key Finding 10: Flexible hours would improve access to supports and services

Newcomers face intense time pressures and are not always able to visit service providers during regular business hours. Many newcomers are working survival jobs. However, they still need access to a regular suite of services. Some newcomer focus group participants said that organizations’ hours of operation were a barrier to access. The same issue was identified as a barrier by 12 per cent of York Region Newcomer Survey respondents. More supports available on evenings and weekends would be helpful for newcomers who are working. Service providers verified this need saying that when they changed their hours of operation to match the needs of the newcomers,

their numbers of clients increased. Unfortunately, for some newcomers, providing services after regular business hours is not sufficient: obligations to work, child care, language classes and family are simply too much for some people to manage in one day.



Awareness and Information

Key Finding 1: Many newcomers are not aware of available supports and services

Many newcomers said they didn't have enough information about available settlement supports and services in York Region. York Region Newcomer Survey participants support this finding: information and awareness were identified as major barriers to accessing services by 35 per cent of respondents. According to newcomer focus group participants, more person-to-person outreach and translation of written information would help inform newcomers of existing services.

The literature indicates that programs and organizations that raise awareness are crucial to the settlement and integration of newcomers. This information connects people to employment, language training, and health services (*Integrating Immigrants: Building Partnerships that Work*, 2006).

Key Finding 2: Outreach is effective in places where newcomers already gather

The way service providers are using outreach is not always in line with the way newcomers best receive information. Service providers indicated that they do outreach through flyers, internet, and marketing (including advertisements). However, focus group participants indicated that newcomers benefit most from direct outreach to communities – in the places newcomers already gather. Interview respondents suggested that engaging with newcomers directly and in person would be preferable. Newcomers would get the support they need and a relationship could develop at the same time. This kind of engagement also benefits service providers since they now have a more direct relationship with individuals and can witness changing priorities in the community. Service

“Expanding access to information is a necessary step to equipping newcomers with the resources to adapt successfully to a new context.”

~ From *Immigration to Participation: A Report on Promising Practices in Integration*, 2008



providers recognized that they would like to do more outreach to newcomers but lacked the funds and resources to do so.

Using informal networks (family, friends, and faith community) or using ethno-cultural media to promote and explain current supports was identified as one of the most effective methods of outreach.

Key Finding 3: More effective delivery of information is needed upon arrival

When they arrived in Canada, many newcomer participants received a binder of information at the airport. However, newcomer focus group participants had mixed reactions to the binders. Some felt that there was too much information, found it overwhelming, and they did not know which services and supports to trust. Others felt that this information lacked detail about services in York Region. Newcomer focus group participants indicated that a more tailored approach would allow newcomers to learn about services in their new home: what is available locally, and who does what. The literature supports this need. What is required are not more sources of information, but better information that raises awareness about effective programs and services (*From Immigration to Participation: A Report on Promising Practices in Integration, 2008*). The York Region Immigration Portal can help address some of these needs.

“It is very difficult to ascertain which programs are legitimate which are credible, there are just so many.”

~ Newcomer Survey Participant

Key Finding 4: Need for better information sharing between front-line staff

Consultation participants identified the need to increase ongoing communication between front-line staff of different organizations by sharing lists of contacts for settlement, mainstream and community-based organizations. Increasing the channels of information-sharing using the Internet, for example would permit more frequent, efficient and accurate updates.

Key Finding 5: Lack of awareness of supports for those who are socially isolated increases their vulnerability

Some consultation participants pointed out that newcomers can become socially isolated if they face language barriers or have been supplanted from their existing social networks in their country of origin. If a person is socially isolated, that can be a barrier to accessing programs and services because the isolated newcomer now has a narrower social network and is less likely to receive information about available services. Focus group participants identified that socially isolated newcomers are harder to reach through outreach. They are also more vulnerable to victimization.

“Accessibility, inclusion, respect for the individual and cultural sensitivity essentially involve offering programs that address the diverse needs and perspectives of immigrants.”

~ From *Immigration to Participation: A Report on Promising Practices in Integration, 2008*

Social Inclusion

Key Finding 1: It takes up to 15 years to integrate socially and economically

“It takes a long time to settle... Five years doesn’t cut it.”

~ Service Provider, Focus Group Participant

Many settlement services are funded to support newcomers until they become Canadian citizens – usually the first five years after arrival in Canada.

Focus group participants said that, for newcomers, the first five years are more about coping and meeting basic needs. The settlement process associated with social inclusion tends to happen after that five year period. The literature explores issues of social inclusion by looking at a broad range of needs such as feelings and sense of belonging that may take a very long time to achieve (*Inclusion: Societies that Foster Belonging Improve Health, 2006*). Research has found that it can take up to 15 years for a newcomer to fully integrate socially and economically.

Key Finding 2: Lack of time and cost can be barriers to community participation

Community involvement can help a newcomer build diverse social networks and acquire a greater sense of belonging, according to the literature (*An Immigration Strategy: the Municipal Perspective 2009; Putting Equity on the Agenda: Are We Being Heard? 2009*). Not only does community involvement support newcomers, it demonstrates to the broader community that newcomers are partners in community building (*Putting Equity on the Agenda: Are We Being Heard? 2009*). However, newcomers face challenges such as lack of time, cost, language barriers, lack of knowledge about how to get involved and lack of confidence in coming forward. For example, some community centre programs offer subsidies to participants. However, these are based on economic need and may exclude newcomers who have savings (even though those savings will be used to support a family through language training and job search). According to some service provider focus group participants, these families are unlikely to pay for community programming and are therefore less likely to benefit from community involvement.

Key Finding 3: More opportunities are needed for newcomers and long-term residents to interact

Participants in the Community Survey indicated that the best way to have newcomers and long-term residents live successfully together is to find opportunities for newcomers to become actively involved in their community. Service provider focus group participants also indicated that it would be helpful to encourage more community involvement through welcome packages.

Key Finding 4: Lack of familiarity with Canadian norms is a challenge to integration and inclusion

“Knowledge of the law is empowering – you’re not integrated until you understand the law and how it affects you.”

~ Interview Participant

According to some consultation participants, adjusting to cultural and legal norms is a significant part of settlement and integration in York Region. For interview respondents, a lack of understanding and trust in the Canadian legal system are barriers to integration. Depending on a newcomer’s country of origin, they may perceive the legal system in Canada as corrupt or ineffective. Two improvements are needed: Canadians need to develop a better understanding of newcomer cultures; and they need to help newcomers to have greater trust in the legal system.

According to participants, adjusting to cultural norms involves finding a healthy balance between the culture they bring and the new culture in which they find themselves.

“Opportunities for established citizens and newcomers to interact cannot be overlooked as acceptance and understanding is often the result of relationship building.”

~ From Immigration to Participation: A Report on Promising Practices in Integration, 2008

Language Needs

Key Finding 1: *Language impacts all aspects of a newcomer's ability to settle and integrate*

Language ability was consistently raised as one of the most important issues facing newcomers settling in York Region. In the York Region Newcomer Survey, the highest proportion of respondents - 60 per cent - identified language training as the greatest need. Language comprehension is extremely important because it has an impact on all of the other challenges that newcomers face in the process of integration. Without effective English skills, newcomers tend to stick within cultural and linguistic groups. This narrows their access to broader social networks. In some cases this can lead to more social isolation and a loss of confidence and self-esteem if the newcomer is not surrounded by their own linguistic community. Lack of English skills affects access to information about services and the ability to get the greatest benefit from those services. A lack of English also affects newcomers' abilities to find employment and gain Canadian experience. In the York Region Newcomer Survey, respondents said that a lack of language ability was the biggest barrier to employment (identified by 49 per cent of respondents).

Language issues for newcomers can also contribute to language issues for their children, according to some interview participants. One interview respondent suggested (s)he has seen second generation children growing up speaking a language other than English as their first language and is seeing more demand for ESL support for second generation children entering the school system.

Key Finding 2: *Language classes need to provide consistent information and address workplace needs*

Language classes were identified as the main way that newcomers try to address language issues. They use these classes to build their English skills and to socialize and develop social networks (*An Analysis of Second Language Training Programs for Older Adults Across Canada, 2008*). However, the classes' effectiveness and the consistency in the quality of teaching had mixed reviews among focus group participants.

Some newcomer focus group participants felt that the vocabulary being taught was too general and not always relevant to the lives of newcomers. The literature suggests that the curriculum should incorporate topics such as Canadian culture and the process of settlement and integration (*An Analysis of Second Language Training Programs for Older Adults Across Canada, 2008*). Many newcomer focus group participants would prefer if students were grouped into classes based on shared professions or work experiences in their country of origin. They would also prefer to be taught vocabulary needed to work in similar professions in York Region. Interview participants and some employer focus group participants identified a shortage of occupation-specific language training programs to support newcomers in building a vocabulary directly related to their careers.

Key Finding 3: *Need for more coordinated, better quality and cost-effective interpretation and translation*

According to many newcomer participants, interpretation and translation services would greatly reduce language barriers for newcomers. Survey of New Immigrant Supports in York Region participants indicated that only seven per cent of mainstream services provide language interpreter services for their clients.



Organizational Capacity and Responsiveness

Key Finding 1: Funding and pace of growth impact organizational capacity

Overall, the consultations highlighted a general need for more effective services and supports for newcomers in York Region. According to participants in the Survey of New Immigrant Supports in York Region and focus groups, organizations are not meeting the current needs of newcomers in York Region. According to focus group participants, newcomers are being turned away from a variety of programs because programs are full. This has driven some newcomers to seek supports and services in Toronto and to turn more to informal supports, according to interview participants. More services, or more funds for services, are needed to expand access to more newcomers – especially for bridging, mentoring, outreach, language classes and accreditation supports.

*In the report **Addressing the Language Needs of New Immigrants in York Region, 2007**, it was identified that enrolment for ESL and Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) classes (14,000) is over triple the number of available seats (4,200).*

Key Finding 2: Mainstream organizations face capacity challenges because of broader mandates

“It’s hard to accommodate different languages if you don’t have the resources.”

~ Participant in Survey for New Immigrant Support in York Region

Mainstream organizations were described by consultation participants as organizations that work with anybody regardless of immigration status. They provide services such as health, education and housing for the broader community and do not specifically support newcomers. Many newcomers rely on mainstream services. Of the participants in the York Region Newcomer Survey, 40 per cent needed health services, 31 per cent needed education and 22 per cent needed housing services. According to the responses in the Survey of New Immigrant Supports in York Region and most mainstream organization participants, those mainstream organizations that do not focus specifically on the needs of newcomers still want to continue to play a supportive role in their settlement. Participants recognized that mainstream organizations need appropriate tools and mechanisms for proper referral to qualified organizations or service providers. Mainstream organizations also need to examine the cultural appropriateness of their programs for them to be inclusive to all residents, including newcomers. The literature supports that building on existing capacities to meet the needs of newcomers is a more effective use of resources – rather than initiating new programs and services (*From Immigration to Participation: A Report on Promising Practices in Integration, 2008*).



Key Finding 3: Funding structure limits ability to strategically anticipate needs

York Region is changing rapidly and services need to adapt to this change. Service provider focus group participants indicated that it is important that organizations respond to emerging trends and to the changing needs of newcomers in their communities. Many participants indicated that it would be ideal to plan for the trends and changes to get ahead of the anticipated need. However, funding decisions are not always based on emerging changes in the community. So some organizations are reactive – instead of proactively planning around the emerging needs of newcomers.

“Settlement process is better supported when communities incorporate immigrant integration as part of their own objectives which means public institutions, each with their own roles and areas of specialization, should be considered as possible settlement resources for new members of the community.”

~ Integrating Immigrants: Building Partnerships that Work, 2006

Key Finding 4: Organizational capacity using inclusive practices and a diverse workforce

Some consultation participants stressed the need to diversify organizations that serve newcomers – preferably by diversifying staff or by using existing staff more effectively. This diversification should happen at all levels: from the management level to the front-line. This would increase any organization’s linguistic and cultural capacity, help build trust with diverse communities, allow any organization to understand local communities in the global context and help it be more responsive to changing priorities. One interview participant said that being able to respond to global crises (such as the earthquake in Haiti in 2010), allows organizations to respond in respectful ways and build positive and lasting relationships with the community.

The *Diversity Matters, 2008* report suggested a number of organizational and structural changes that are less resource intensive and create a more diverse workplace. These include making board diversity a policy, setting measurable goals for diversity, recruiting for diversity and reporting on progress to stay accountable.

Collaboration and Partnership

Key Finding 1: Partnership increases capacity and has potential for knowledge sharing and growth

Collaboration and partnerships were identified throughout the consultation process as ways of alleviating capacity issues. The need for collaboration and partnership was identified by many service provider focus group and Survey of New Immigrant Supports in York Region participants as important in supporting newcomers during the settlement process. Partnerships can help organizations attract new sources of funding that were previously inaccessible to them. Interview respondents and the literature (*From Immigration to Participation: A Report on Promising Practices in Integration, 2008*) also identify partnerships as necessary because many of the issues affecting newcomers cross multiple sectors. For example, labour market integration is more successful when employment organizations, education sectors, professional associations and businesses collaborate and network. Partnerships support a more client-centred and holistic approach to providing services.

Key Finding 2: A good foundation for collaboration exists in York Region

Throughout the consultation process participants indicated that service providers were more focused on collaboration than on competition. This sense of collaboration was attributed, by some participants, to the small size of the settlement service sector in York Region. This collaboration takes many forms including space and knowledge sharing, coordinated training and outreach. According to the Survey of New Immigrant Supports in York Region, mainstream organization participants were more likely to be concerned about competition because for them, collaboration means entering into areas where other organizations are already receiving funding. If a mainstream organization

diversifies its services, it is likely going to be competing for funds with other organizations. Faith and cultural focus group participants also indicated that they are starting to collaborate more with formal services.

Key Finding 3: Meaningful partnerships require time and resources

“Partnership is a necessity but we need resources to make it work.”

~ Participant in Survey for New Immigrant Supports in York Region

Partnerships can help expand the capacity of an organization to address the needs of newcomers. However, many service provider participants in the Survey of New Immigrant Supports in York Region pointed out that while partnerships are beneficial, they are not cost-free and take time and resources to be effective. According to interview participants, maintaining partnerships involves negotiation, compromise, flexibility and establishing common and realistic expectations. To maximize benefits that partnerships can provide, funders need to invest in these efforts.

Key Finding 4: More information and knowledge sharing needed across sectors

Some participants also highlighted the need for more information sharing across sectors. Newcomers have many needs across many sectors during their integration (housing, health, legal, education, social services). Therefore information sharing should also take place consistently across those sectors. This would help service providers reach out to new clients, support the process of referral across sectors and raise awareness of other issues. For example, information sharing between legal aid clinics and housing supports would allow the housing support provider to understand the client's experience with and understanding of the eviction process and tenants' rights.

“Communities that enjoy the most success are those that engage all sectors.”

- An Immigration Strategy: the Municipal Perspective, 2009

Funding and Government Policy

Key Finding 1: Funding systems make service planning challenging

While funding and government policies are responsible for many of the supports and services that benefit newcomers, there is room for improvement. Service provider participants, especially those involved in settlement and social services indicated a need for more consistent funding from year to year. Current, funding inconsistencies discourage some organizations from long-term service planning and encourage them to focus only on immediate needs. Recent changes to funding for some types of work have generated a sense of uncertainty amongst service provider participants. Longer term funding would create better trust between service providers and newcomers because newcomers could receive continual supports from year to year. Service providers are constrained by the need to deliver very specific services and not stray beyond their responsibilities – this further challenges their ability to respond to emerging needs (*Unsettled: Legal and Policy Barriers for Newcomers to Canada, 2006*).

Key Finding 2: All levels of government have important roles in supporting the settlement and integration of newcomers

The federal government develops pre-arrival assessment tools, provides information to help newcomers find settlement and employment services, and facilitates collaboration across sectors (*A Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Credentials*). However, between the initial stages of immigration and the final step of settlement and integration, the roles of federal and provincial governments in supporting newcomers are unclear (*Unsettled: Legal and Policy Barriers for Newcomers to Canada, 2006*). Local governments also play a critical role and need to ensure welcoming living environments and provide municipal services that are culturally appropriate (*An Immigration Strategy: the Municipal Perspective, 2009*).

Key Finding 3: Funding disparities for settlement services continue to exist between other GTA municipalities and York Region

Although funding to the Region has increased in the last few years, funding resources haven't kept up with the pace of growth. Some participants pointed out that funding for York Region services is lower than in other municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) even when comparing funds on a per newcomer basis. Furthermore, participants felt that funding allocations do not consider secondary migration, where newcomers move from their original place of settlement within weeks, months or a few years after arrival. York Region receives many newcomers through secondary migration. Since the funding formula used by federal or provincial government may not account for these newcomers, this leaves York Region in a challenging position to meet the needs of its growing number of newcomers.

“All supports are lacking. Don't know one that is funded to anywhere near the levels in Toronto. When you stop and consider the size of the Region against the size of Toronto, you shouldn't see the disparity that you see.”

~ Interview Participant

Welcoming Communities

Key Finding 1: A sense of community is grounded in social connection

Consultation participants generally consider York Region to be a welcoming place to live. In the York Region Newcomer Survey, 73 per cent of newcomer respondents said that they “always” or “often” feel at home in their community. While this is a positive response, another 27 per cent of newcomer participants felt at home only “sometimes” or less often. Many of the consultation participants across different populations had different ideas of what community meant to them. Focus group responses of what makes a community ranged from physical neighbourhoods to a group of people with common interests, who use common services or belong to a common religion. However, those factors most often mentioned were social connection and a sense of confidence and comfort.

Key Finding 2: More education is needed about the benefits newcomers bring to communities

“Media stereotypes exacerbate the negative feelings towards certain communities.”

~ Service Provider, Focus Group participant

Creating welcoming communities is a two-way street and requires efforts from both newcomers and existing communities. Across the consultation process, different stakeholders and newcomers shared their belief that newcomers benefit York Region in terms of reducing workforce shortages, growing the economy, developing better international networks, bringing a better understanding of international contexts, and bringing more diversity and cultural vibrancy to the region. Given these benefits, service provider focus group participants said

broader communities need more education about both the benefits that newcomers provide and the challenges they face. According to some focus group participants, this education would also address the stigma associated with immigration and help to deconstruct stereotypes.

According to the literature on best practices, the benefits of newcomers can be promoted through interactions between newcomers and long-term residents, ad campaigns and non-conventional or arts-based promotion (*From Immigration to Participation: A Report on Promising Practices in Integration, 2008*).

Key Finding 3: Community attitude is a factor in creating welcoming communities

“All it takes sometimes is a smile from a neighbour to create a welcoming environment.”

~ Newcomer, Focus Group Participant

Community attitude and receptivity can significantly influence whether or not a newcomer feels at home in York Region. The York Region Newcomer Survey found that 11 per cent of newcomers said they experienced

discrimination. Those respondents who had experienced discrimination were twice as likely as other newcomers to feel at home either “rarely” or “never”. More than 26 per cent of participants in the Community Survey said addressing issues of racism and discrimination was needed for newcomers and long-term residents to live together successfully. Interestingly, Canadian-born participants were three times more likely than newcomers to indicate addressing issues of community attitude towards newcomers as a priority.

Some newcomer focus group participants indicated that their settlement experience was challenging because they did not always feel welcome or included in the community. Perpetual stereotypes and community receptivity towards newcomers affect newcomers’ ability to integrate successfully. The literature indicates that newcomers who are racial minorities are slower to integrate, in part, because of discrimination (*Racial Inequality, Social Cohesion, and Policy Issues in Canada, 2006*).

Key Finding 4: Living in own cultural community has benefits but narrowed social networks can delay integration

“We recognize that when people are valued, they are willing, empowered, motivated, and tend to contribute to the community.”

~ Interview Participant

The consultation process made it clear that welcoming communities and social inclusion are tied together through the formation of cultural enclaves. Many newcomer participants in the York Region Newcomer Survey and focus groups chose to move to York Region to be close to family, cultural or religious communities. They said they feel welcome in communities where there are people who speak their language, have experienced similar processes of settlement and, in some cases, look the same as they do. Many focus group participants spoke about the tension between being comfortable within their cultural communities and wanting to live in more mixed communities to feel more included in the broader community. Newcomer participants found it challenging to build social networks outside their cultural communities when living in their enclaves.

Despite these challenges, a number of enclaves have formed around ethno-cultural newcomers in York Region. Service provider participants said that enclaves can help alleviate some of the immediate pressures on newcomers to meet basic needs such as income and housing. Interview respondents indicated that limiting social networks to one's own cultural community actually delays the process of settlement and integration. The literature also indicates that some newcomers will have difficulty moving outside cultural enclaves because of financial or cultural pressures (*Newcomer Integration Policies in Canada, 2004*). Focus group participants said that some newcomers come out of their enclaves after five years and need the same integration supports as newcomers, only to find that the infrastructure is not in place to support them. Enclaves can develop what newcomer focus group participants called “back-home mentalities” that some newcomers came to Canada to get away from. Many newcomer participants wished to reach out to diverse social networks and understood the benefits of doing so in terms of language development, employment and long-term settlement.



“An inclusive society is one that creates both the feeling and reality of belonging. Belonging makes us feel good. It makes us healthy. It makes us want to reach out to others. Belonging makes our communities healthy too.”

~ Count Me In Campaign, 2006

Employment

Key Finding 1: Newcomers need support for soft skill development, networking and accreditation

Employment is one of the most significant and immediate needs of newcomers and is a determinant of successful settlement and integration. However, employment is one of the greatest challenges facing newcomers. Only 38 per cent of York Region Newcomer Survey participants were working at the time of the survey. Of York Region Newcomer Survey respondents, employment services were the second most needed service, identified as a need by 42 per cent of newcomers. According to focus group participants, employment needs of newcomers have been changing in York Region over the past few years. Participants identified the following challenges:

- The process for credential recognition can be complex, costly and lengthy
- Newcomers need more soft skills development to get and keep jobs
- Newcomers need more networking opportunities as a way to find jobs
- Newcomers need more follow-up in the employment support system

“One of the most crucial bridges to integration is full employment. Immigrants’ employment issues hinder their integration.”

~ Opening Doors: Improving Employment Outcomes for Newcomers in York Region, 2009

“The costs of not utilizing newcomers’ skills are numerous, and they impact Canada, the sending countries, and the immigrants themselves and their families. Economic costs include labour shortages, unnecessary retraining, a greater burden on social programs, the loss of potential tax revenue, and an overall increase in immigrant poverty rates. In social terms, the exclusion of newcomers has costs in terms of ethnic and race relations, human rights, the settlement process, and mental health.”

~ Unsettled: Legal and Policy Barriers for Newcomers to Canada, 2006

Key Finding 2: Newcomer entrepreneurs contribute to our economy but need support to succeed

While newcomers possess the necessary skills, resources and interest to start new businesses, they need a support system to help them navigate the system. The Newcomer Entrepreneurship Experience in York Region states that many of the newcomer participants had not used any small business, skills development or immigrant services. Newcomers clearly needed help, but did not know how to navigate various bureaucracies to get the information. *The Top Report: Tomorrow's Opportunities Priorities, 2010*, identifies as a priority to provide resources and support to newcomers to York Region who have strong entrepreneur skills and aspirations, but lack the necessary information and support services to ensure the successful launch of a variety of new enterprises.

Key Finding 3: Lack of “Canadian experience” is a barrier for employment

“Immigrants are frustrated...they come with a rosy picture – hopes are dashed within a week of arrival.”

~ Newcomer, Focus Group Participant

Many consultation participants said many newcomers are encountering employment challenges associated with a lack of Canadian experience. Lack of Canadian experience was the second biggest barrier to employment (following language) for participants in the York Region Newcomer Survey. It was identified as an employment barrier by 48 per cent of respondents. Many newcomer focus group participants expressed frustration with the term “Canadian experience” and some saw it simply as an excuse not to hire newcomers. *The Making Connections: Ottawa's Role in Immigrant Employment report, 2007*, suggests that the term “Canadian experience” refers to a need for soft skills including “knowledge of workplace cultural expectations and practices, employment standards, organizational structures, and effective communication styles”. Both the literature (*Behind the Masks: Testimonials from Those Marginalized By Income, 2010*) and newcomer focus group participants said it would be helpful to have more information in countries of origin about the expectations of experience before coming to Canada.

“My friends say that Canada doesn't want us, they want our children.”

~ Newcomer Survey Participant

The perceived need for Canadian experience led some newcomer focus group participants to find survival jobs that are not in their field, or to look for volunteer experience. However, both of these activities cause problems for further career planning because they take up too much time. Most participants (66 per cent) in the Community Survey also suggested that practice firms, mentorship and internship programs could help provide more opportunities for Canadian experience.

Key Finding 4: Unemployment and underemployment result in loss of skills for newcomers

Newcomers who cannot find work that matches their skills and education face problems in settlement and integration. Of those newcomers surveyed in the York Region Newcomer Survey, 43 per cent of those who were working had jobs that did not match their skills or education. A further 13 per cent were working multiple jobs at the same time. Over half of the participants in the Community Survey rated newcomers' ability to use their skills and knowledge as only “fair” or “poor” in York Region. Challenges in finding work that matches skills and experience can lead to stress, depression and sleeplessness, according to newcomer focus group participants. In the case of underemployment, it is about pride – newcomer participants indicated that working in jobs that do not match their qualifications, or being rejected from jobs they know they are qualified for, affects their self-esteem and can lead to some returning to their country of origin.

“I don't want to use welfare and other supports, I want to use my experience to help this country.”

~ Newcomer, Focus Group Participant

Key Finding 5: Mentorship and bridging programs are helpful, but there is limited availability in York Region

The Conference Board of Canada stated in 2008 that underusing newcomers accounts for a loss of between \$4 to \$6 billion to the Canadian economy.

Mentorship and bridging programs provided through organizations such as TRIEC, Seneca College and York University were identified by newcomer, service provider and employer focus group participants and literature as being effective at connecting newcomers to work in their field. These programs meet multiple needs at once. *Opening Doors: Improving Employment Outcomes for Newcomers in York Region, 2009* reports that these programs also give newcomers the chance to gain Canadian experience in their field. However, these types of programs are not widely available in York Region.



It is estimated that over the next 10 years, an estimated 100,000 to 150,000 baby boomers in the York Region workforce will begin to retire.

~ Aging Workforce Study, The Regional Municipality of York, 2011

Employer Needs

Key Finding 1: Need for more employer education about benefits of hiring newcomers

According to focus group participants, part of the solution to employment challenges is to work with employers and support them in hiring newcomers. Consultation participants indicated a need for more education for employers about employee rights. According to newcomer focus group participants, some employers ask for information about age and background. For employers, the major barrier to hiring newcomers is a lack of predictability that if skills learned abroad matches Canadian workplace and how newcomers fit within companies. Employer focus group participants indicated that these challenges need to be addressed before newcomers are hired.

Employer focus group participants said they need more education about how to properly screen potential employees and the benefits of hiring newcomers. They said employers would also benefit from more information about anticipated worker shortages in the next 10 to 15 years, especially in areas which demand highly skilled labourers. *Newcomers – a Resource for Your Business, 2009* also lists some of the benefits of hiring newcomers: their education and work experience, their understanding of global business contexts and their ability to bring in more business.

“The continued under-employment of newcomers remains a serious barrier to their successful transition to a new life. This is not an ‘immigrants’ problem; it is a Canadian societal problem.”

~ An Immigration Strategy: The Municipal Perspective, 2009

Key Finding 2: Small and medium-sized businesses have distinct challenges and opportunities in supporting newcomers

According to the *Top Report: Tomorrow’s Opportunities Priorities, 2010*, 85 per cent of small and medium-sized businesses in York Region are businesses that employ less than 20 people. These businesses rarely have a large Human Resources department, so they have fewer resources to dedicate to recruitment. Smaller businesses are also usually the last in an industry sector to hire because they have less financial flexibility. Small and medium-sized businesses are more likely to feel the effects of labour shortages, because larger companies (with greater resources) are able to hire skilled newcomers. Employer participants highlighted this trend as a problem, suggesting small and medium-sized businesses need to hire skilled newcomers sooner. Service provider participants said that funding incentives are needed to encourage employers to hire newcomers. Employer focus group participants highlighted the success of summer student employment program incentives.

Key Finding 3: Employers need more opportunities to coordinate, share information and connect to potential talent pools

“To hire a newcomer, that’s an unknown for employers. We need to break down the [process] into manageable steps.”

~ Employer, Focus Group Participant

It can be challenging for employers to navigate the best ways to connect with skilled workers. Employer focus group participants said there should be more opportunities for employers to talk to each other about their successes with hiring newcomers. This would also allow for cross-sectoral learning. It would be helpful if there was a central hub where employers could connect with potential employees, including newcomers. This would also be helpful to newcomers because they often encounter employment barriers by applying for jobs through inappropriate or incorrect channels.

Health

Key Finding 1: Access to health care is challenging because of health services gaps

“You have to know someone to find a doctor.”

~ Newcomer, Focus Group Participant

Access to health care services was identified by participants as a serious issue for newcomers in York Region. According to York Region Newcomer Survey participants, 40 per cent needed health services. Interview participants supported this finding and suggested that health care system information and navigation were significant health access issues for newcomers.

In addition to finding access to health services, many participants identified a need for better or culturally appropriate health care coverage for newcomers. Some newcomer participants said the three months wait time to receive OHIP coverage meant they don't have health care coverage. This means they do not access health care during this time even if they need it. Gaps in health services can be particularly harmful when it comes to chronic diseases where quick treatment can make a large impact on the health of the newcomer. (*Unsettled: Legal and Policy Barriers for Newcomers to Canada, 2006*).

Key Finding 2: Immigrants' health deteriorates over time

Health Status and Social Capital of Newcomers in Canada: Evidence from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, 2010 highlights what it describes as the “healthy immigrant effect”. This is a phenomenon experienced by newcomers. Newcomers typically arrive in Canada with health indicators better than Canadian-born residents. However, their health diminishes over time to indicators below those of Canadian-born residents. *Health Status and Social Capital of Newcomers in Canada: Evidence from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, 2010* found that many newcomers had strong friendship networks within their own communities and these networks had a strong positive effect on health. Over time, the stresses of settlement and integration can have negative effects on health (see the mental health key finding). According to the *Short-Term Health of Canada's New Immigrant Arrivals, 2010* immigrant health upon arrival to Canada varies based on economic status. Those who arrive based on the point system tend to have better health than refugees or family members of the primary applicant.

Key Finding 3: Mental health is increasingly an issue for newcomers

“Addiction and mental health, lots of stigma, people don't come to access services... requires lots of outreach.”

~ Service Provider, Focus Group Participant

Mental health can be described as mental or emotional well-being and mental health issues can take the form of anxiety, stress, depression, or other mental disorders or mental illnesses. Interview respondents indicated that they see more issues with anxiety and mental health than in the past because of the stresses of settlement. *The Newcomer Integration Policies in Canada, 2004* report indicates that language and employment challenges are particularly likely to lead to mental health issues. This was supported by some focus group participants who said the process of immigration is becoming a risk factor for mental health issues and this should be addressed.

Service provider focus group participants and participants in the Survey of New Immigrant Supports in York Region said the problem is compounded by a lack of mental health services to serve all of York Region's population. There is even fewer mental health services designed for immigrant populations. Some newcomer focus group participants also pointed out that coming to Canada means some newcomers lose feelings of self-worth at the same time they have lost their social network and social status from their country of origin. According to participants, mental health is still attached to a stigma that prevents some newcomer communities from accessing services or even talking about their problems. Just as for the rest of the population, the stigma of mental health issues exists for newcomers to York Region and needs to be addressed.

“All service providers need health equity plans – interpretation and language barriers are the key block to health equity.”

~ Interview Participant

Housing

Key Finding 1: Lack of affordable housing in York Region contributes to unstable housing situations

There are limited affordable housing options in York Region. This affects newcomers who are already facing challenges finding employment and a stable income. Participants in the housing group said there are low vacancies for rental housing and even less availability of rent-geared-to-income housing found in social housing communities. *The Housing for Immigrants in Ontario's Medium-Sized Cities, 2008* report lists a number of problems resulting from a lack of affordable housing for newcomers: less money to advance education or careers, poor health and mental health, postponement of social development and inclusion, discrimination against women with children seeking rental in the private market, and families living in substandard housing. Some focus group participants identified the need for more rent-geared-to-income and affordable housing options in York Region to help alleviate some of these problems.

Many newcomer participants identified that they buy homes with costs split between multiple generations or extended family, who then all live under the same roof. This approach is supported in the literature through *Immigrants and Homelessness – at Risk in Canada's Outer Suburbs: A Pilot Study in York Region, 2009*. This can make housing more affordable, but it presents some challenges. Intergenerational conflict can arise. This approach can also create unstable housing situations. According to interview participants, in a housing situation where multiple incomes are needed to support mortgage payments, all it takes is one layoff to put the entire housing situation at risk.

“I pay \$1,600 per month in rent... I can't afford this but can't move out of the community for my family.”

~ Newcomer, Focus Group Participant

Key Finding 2: Settlement supports need to offer support in finding housing

While some newcomer consultation participants identified settlement supports as helpful, more participants were frustrated with the kinds of supports that are offered. Participants said that some housing supports give newcomers information without asking about their housing needs or the kinds of communities that newcomers prefer. For these reasons, many newcomer focus group participants have relied on personal connections to find appropriate housing. For example, one participant's hairdresser rented the family an apartment.

Key Finding 3: Newcomers need more education about tenants' rights

The consultation results identified a number of challenges with housing for newcomers. Employment affects the ability of a newcomer to find housing

in York Region. Some landlords will ask newcomers for income information before they will rent. If the newcomer is unemployed, they are then less likely to find housing.

Newcomer focus group participants also suggested some landlords take advantage of newcomer families. This happens most often when a landlord asks for several months' rent in advance. Newcomers need to know what they are required to do and what their rights are in a rental situation. This is particularly important for those newcomers with language barriers because they are more likely to be vulnerable.

“Access to housing is key to a newcomer's sense of stability, providing the base for enrolling children into school, beginning job search, and connecting to the community.”

~ An Immigration Strategy: the Municipal Perspective, 2009

PRIORITY POPULATIONS

Newcomer Women

Key Finding 1: Women face the biggest gaps in programs and services

According to the Survey of New Immigrant Supports in York Region, service providers said newcomer women face the biggest gaps in terms of finding appropriate programs and services. Newcomer women require specific help, such as supports for transitioning to the paid workforce after working in the home, and programs for isolated mothers or for victims of family violence.

Key Finding 2: The caregiver role in the family highlights need for child care supports

“I feel like I lost myself when I came to Canada.”

~ Woman Newcomer, Focus Group Participant

Many newcomer women are expected to play a caregiver role in the family. According to focus group participants, access to child care supports would allow newcomer women to gain access to services, to go back to school to get their credentials recognized, and would even allow women to look for paid work. Because women are often the primary caregiver, men are often the ones going back to school to get their credentials recognized and ultimately finding jobs in their field (*From Immigration to Participation: A Report on Promising Practices in Integration*, 2008). For some newcomer women participants, the role of caregiver is challenging because they are highly educated and accustomed to working outside the home in their country of origin. This can lead to some newcomer women participants becoming depressed.

Key Finding 3: Finding employment is a greater challenge for women

Issues of employment generally affect newcomer women more than men. Of those who participated in the York Region Newcomer Survey, men were nearly twice as likely to be employed as women. According to interview participants, the challenges for women seeking employment could be greater than anticipated. Most data about newcomers' careers and skills is gathered from primary applicants. The primary applicants are usually men. Consequently, there is likely a lack of accurate information about the employment needs of newcomer women.



“In bridging programs, sometimes women are supporting a family while getting their credentials.”

~ Interview Participant

Key Finding 4: Domestic violence further isolates newcomer women

While only a few service provider focus group participants raised the issue of domestic violence, it was seen as an important issue for newcomer 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.

Newcomer Youth

Key Finding 1: Youth need after school programs, peer support groups and safe “hang out” spots

“Youth are the future of Canada, if we lose our youth, we lose a piece of Canada.”

~ Service Provider, Focus Group Participant

Newcomer youth often have less to do after school than others of their age because their parents are not aware of, or cannot afford extracurricular activities. Some newcomer youth participants said they took part in after-school sports but such programs are not widely available and are frequently too expensive. While some service provider participants identified a number of immigrant-specific youth groups, most of the newcomer youth participants were not aware of them. The Survey of New Immigrant Supports identified the need for after school programs, peer support groups and safe “hang out” spots.

Key Finding 2: Youth have an easier time settling and integrating than their parents

Youth focus group participants understood that their parents have more responsibilities and were under more pressure than they were. They felt it was easier for them to immigrate than for their parents. While newcomer youth focus group participants were not in control of their living situation, they understood that their parents carried the burden of most of the household responsibilities including finding supports and meeting basic financial needs. They saw this arrangement as beneficial to them since it meant they could focus on school and save money after high school more easily. However, *From Immigration to Participation: A Report on Promising Practices in Integration, 2008* suggests that children of parents who are not able to support the family financially are more likely to face issues of “alienation, poor academic performance, and deviant behaviour linked to issues with self-esteem”.

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 pick up English and to meet people. Interview respondents supported the claim that settlement and integration were easier, the younger the age of

immigration. Interview participants also said that 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. The literature also indicates that youth who come to Canada later in their lives are more likely to face issues of peer pressure, self-identity and conflict between parents, peers and institutions (*From Immigration to Participation: A Report on Promising Practices in Integration, 2008*).

Key Finding 3: Process of integration leads to inter-generational conflict

The lack of opportunities for cultural understanding between Canadian culture and the culture of a newcomer’s country of origin has also led to conflict in households. According to newcomer focus group participants, 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 the country of origin. Newcomer parents often maintain high levels of pressure on their children to ensure that their children have better opportunities than they did. This pressure can create stress for youth newcomers. Some youth focus group participants indicated that they began to feel ashamed of their parents because of their parents’ lack of English skills and cultural awareness. Youth newcomers can also find it hard to balance both cultures. Service provider focus group participants said more family supports are needed, particularly those that deal with intergenerational conflict.

Key Finding 4: Making friends can be challenging for youth

As raised in the Service Use and Accessibility section, the size of York Region presents challenges to newcomers. Youth focus group participants said the distances between communities make it hard to visit friends. Some youth are increasingly more likely to rely on technology to connect with friends through social media. Many newcomer youth focus group participants have tried to stay in touch with their friends in their country of origin using the same technological methods. However, others said there comes a time where they had to move on from their old friends and make new friends in York Region. While there are plenty of opportunities at school to make friends, many youth identified challenges with doing so. Social circles at school are usually based on cultural circles, or groups of friends that formed prior to the arrival of the newcomer. It is hard to break into these circles and many youth said they ended up making friends with people in their own cultural group.

Key Finding 5: Need to address language and cultural barriers at school

Language also presents a significant barrier to making friends at school. Youth newcomer focus group participants said being able to speak English can help them be accepted by their peers. Here, language is not just about comprehension and vocabulary but is also about the youth's ability to use slang appropriately. Youth said language classes are often too formal and they need a chance to learn informal English including common slang. Other cultural norms present challenges for newcomer youth focus group participants; for example, as simple as learning when to laugh at jokes. Other social pressures and stereotypes can cause newcomer youth to feel judged by their peers based on how they dress and behave. According to interview respondents, for those youth with the greatest language barriers, there is a need for language supports specific to their circumstances.

Some youth newcomer participants identified having to go back a grade upon arrival in Canada to retake certain courses. Many did not know that they would have to repeat classes and were surprised by this. Finally, many youth find the education system's core French language requirements to be challenging. They already face language barriers because of comprehension issues with English.



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

~ Youth Newcomer, Focus Group Participant

Newcomer Seniors

Key Finding 1: Seniors are at high risk of facing social isolation

Newcomer seniors, like women and youth, are generally not coming to Canada as the primary applicant. Interview respondents and focus group participants said York Region was increasingly becoming home to newcomer seniors coming to Canada as sponsored family members of the primary applicant. According to interview participants, seniors are often the least likely in the family to speak English. Senior participants indicated that it was harder to learn English at an older age. *An Analysis of Second Language Training Programs for Older Adults Across Canada, 2008* indicates that targeted language classes for seniors would help maintain them learn at an appropriate pace. Some service provider focus group participants said some tension exists between seniors who speak English and those who do not in the same housing complex. In these situations, cliques of seniors can form based on language and culture. Housing focus group participants indicated that where most housing residents are immigrants, the tensions and divisions are lower.

Senior focus group participants said they need more social programs offered in their own language to help reduce social isolation. Senior participants said they are often uprooted from links in their country of origin – especially in cases where their spouse has passed away – and can feel very alone in Canada.

Key Finding 2: Health is a significant and growing challenge for newcomer seniors

While health is of increased concern for all seniors, newcomer seniors face particular challenges around access to appropriate health care services. The specific need for health services for newcomer seniors is supported by the York Region Newcomer Survey. It showed a higher percentage of seniors (59 per cent) needed health services than average (40 per cent). Interview respondents said ageing at home was a challenge for newcomer seniors because they rely on their families for health support. According to respondents, this indicated a need for improved culturally appropriate access to primary health care. Seniors face particular challenges in finding family doctors and interpreters to overcome language barriers, according to senior focus group participants. Beyond

primary health care challenges, service provider focus group participants said York Region needs more culturally appropriate long term care facilities.

Key Finding 3: Social and financial independence are significant issues for seniors

Because many newcomer seniors are living at home with their families, the issue of independence was significant for senior consultation participants. Many seniors said the need to stay at home to look after children means that they have less time to earn income, socialize and leave the home. Some senior participants were not aware of social supports that are available to them.

As well, transportation costs generally need to be covered by the family. Finally, some seniors indicated that they do not know how to get to their destination, so even if they could travel independently it would not be helpful to them.

Some senior focus group participants said they would like to be working but were unable to because of family duties. Seniors also face other barriers to employment including language challenges and isolation. These barriers lead to a lack of social networks. Seniors are more likely to require other financial supports such as the Ontario Disability Support Program and Old Age Security. However, current income support eligibility is restricted by federal sponsorship rules. For example, children who sponsor their parents to come to Canada are financially responsible for them for 10 years. In such circumstances, a senior cannot apply for income support since it would be considered a break-down in the family's sponsorship agreement. This prevents seniors from seeking financial supports even when they are in need.

“Financial independence is a challenge... not comfortable using kids’ money for shopping.”

~ Senior Newcomer, Focus Group Participant

Key Finding 4: *Changing family duties has mixed impact on seniors*

Senior consultation participants identified a number of changes to their role in the family since coming to Canada. First, many seniors lived independently in their country of origin. They lived in their own home, owned their own land and had an established network of friends and extended family. Second, they are now responsible for cooking for their families and cooking food they are not used to since children and youth who are more integrated into Canadian society want to eat Canadian food. Third, for some senior participants, men are now more active in household duties than they were in their country of origin. This includes cooking, cleaning, child care and gardening. According to participants, these roles for men are new for many seniors. Most newcomer seniors said they were happy to play these roles in the family because it makes them feel as if they are contributing to their family. However, some suggested that being stuck at home all day can create “mental agony”. This further emphasizes the complexity of some newcomer situations and the diversity of settlement experiences from person to person.



Francophone Immigrants

Key Finding 1: Need for language appropriate services

For Francophone immigrant consultation participants, the need for language appropriate services was the biggest issue. Some participants said that they were less likely to use formal services because these services are not offered in French. To find services in French, many immigrants are going to Toronto.

However, these services are not geographically accessible because the trip can take two hours each way. For some Francophone immigrants, the lack of language appropriate services was a shock. They thought since Canada was a bilingual country, there would be more French speakers here. Immigrants need to develop more realistic expectations of language skills before they arrive in York Region. According to Francophone immigrant focus group participants, there is a perceived lack of French-speaking doctors in York Region. Again, language becomes an important barrier to finding health care because health vocabulary is specific and complex.

Key Finding 2: 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.



“Even though there are lists of doctors who speak French on their website, these doctors don’t speak well enough.”

~ Francophone Newcomer, Focus Group Participant

NEXT STEPS

These findings provide the story behind the current experience of newcomers living in York Region and have been woven into the priorities of the York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy. The Strategy sets out a long term vision of successful integration of newcomers in York Region by identifying five community results:

- ***York Region is a community that is welcoming and inclusive*** – a community that openly receives newcomers, promotes social equity and is cohesive. It is a community that understands the needs of newcomers and facilitates their full participation in all aspects of community life, the economy and Canadian society.
- ***Newcomers are economically integrated*** – newcomers strive and are succeeding in the labour market, have jobs that match their skills and education, are living in affordable, stable and safe housing and have a liveable household income. Newcomers help meet labour market shortages and keep York Region economically competitive.
- ***Newcomers are socially integrated*** – newcomers connect with the community and feel included, valued and positively linked to the people, places and things within and outside their communities. Newcomers feel safe and are living healthy lives.
- ***Newcomers are culturally integrated*** – newcomers have and seize opportunities to be actively engaged, feel part of Canadian culture and understand Canadian values. Newcomers can practice and share their own culture and learn about and interact with other cultures. Newcomers understand the social and cultural norms of various cultures and are able to practice them appropriately.
- ***Newcomers are civically and politically integrated*** – newcomers understand, can access and trust the Canadian government, policing services and the political and justice systems. Newcomers take active roles in community building and take leadership roles within organizations and institutions.

York Region - in collaboration with the Community Partnership Council - will be creating an action plan based on these community results. Community input will be sought to ensure that they are meaningful to newcomers and all residents of York Region.

Critical to the success of the Strategy will be the collective leadership, partnerships and engagement of community stakeholders to move from talk to action.

Together we can make a difference.

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York Region Local Immigration Partnership Initiative
Funded By:



Citizenship and
Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et
Immigration Canada

York Region Local Immigration
PARTNERSHIP 
LEADING CHANGE FOR A STRONGER COMMUNITY



York Region's Immigration Settlement Strategy: *Leading Change for a Stronger Community*

Presentation to Community and
Health Services Committee

September 14, 2011

Slide 1

Purpose

- ❑ Information on newcomers living in York Region
- ❑ Overview of the Local Immigration Partnership initiative and the York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy
- ❑ Proposed early successes
- ❑ What the Strategy means for the community



Community and Health Service Committee/ September 14, 2011

Slide 2

Newcomers living in York Region

Changing Demographics

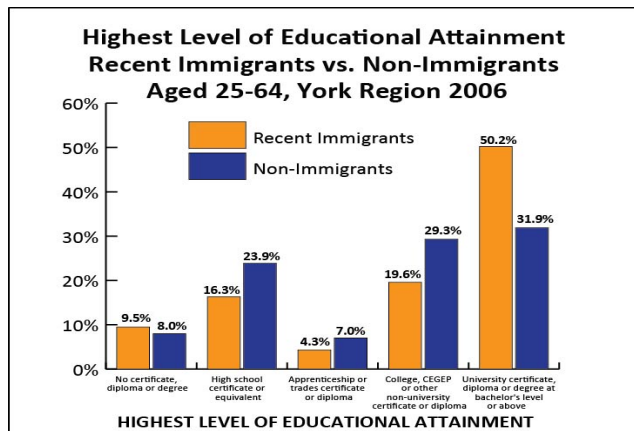
- ❑ There will be significant increases in the diversity of the population over the next two decades.
- ❑ By 2031, 55% of York Region population will be immigrants.



Community and Health Services Committee/ September 14, 2011

Slide 3

Recent immigrants continue to be well-educated but often hold jobs that don't match their skills



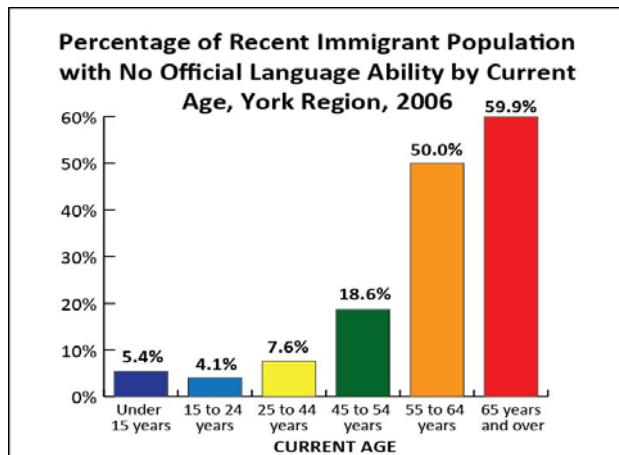
Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulation



Community and Health Services Committee/ September 14, 2011

Slide 4

Knowledge of official language impacts all aspects of integration



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulation

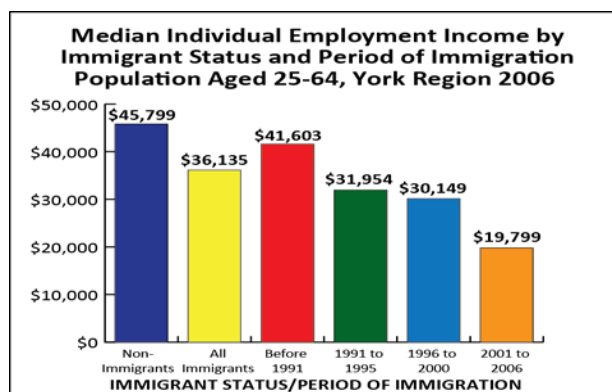


Community and Health Services Committee/ September 14, 2011

Slide 5

How are newcomers faring?

After 15 years of living in Canada immigrants still earn slightly less than Canadian born residents



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulation



Community and Health Services Committee/ September 14, 2011

Slide 6

Newcomers are important to York Region's vitality

- ❑ Newcomers contribute to the economy by becoming homeowners, consumers and entrepreneurs.
- ❑ Newcomers bring cultural richness and vibrancy to our communities.

York Region's Immigration Settlement Strategy

Overview of Local Immigration Partnership Initiative

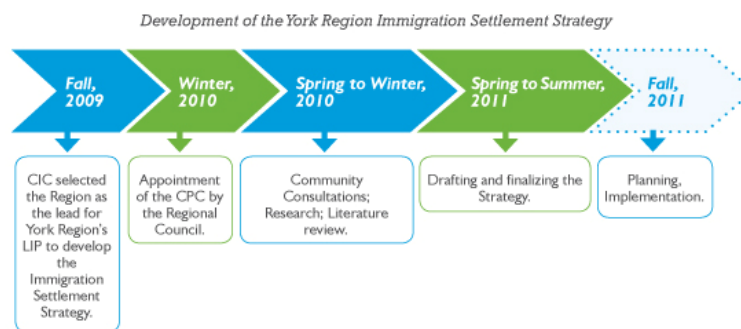
Deliverables:

- ❑ Establish a Community Partnership Council
- ❑ Develop an Immigration Settlement Strategy

Objectives:

- ❑ Improve access to and coordination of immigrant integration services
- ❑ Improve labour market outcomes
- ❑ Strengthen regional awareness and capacity to successfully integrate immigrants

Immigration Settlement Strategy: Collaborative Planning Process



The Strategy takes a holistic perspective that sets a long-term vision for the well-being of newcomers

Community Results for the York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy



Strong Linkages to other Regional initiatives



Immigration Settlement Strategy: Implementation Framework

DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN



Next Steps and initial successes resulting from the Strategy

- ❑ Immigrant Priority Groups (Women, Youth, Seniors, Francophones) Profiles
- ❑ Maximizing the use of York Region Immigration Portal
- ❑ Exploring new partnerships and collaboration between funders
- ❑ Proposed establishment of a Municipal Diversity Reference Group

Critical Elements for Successful Implementation

- ❑ Collaborative leadership from the Community Partnership Council and the Region
- ❑ Engaging the broader community
- ❑ Leveraging partnerships and increasing capacity in the Region



Community and Health Services Committee/ September 14, 2011

Slide 15

Benefits to the Community

- ❑ A forum for collective planning and strengthening stakeholder partnerships in York Region.
- ❑ Provides common goals and “lens” to inform future planning to meet the needs of our newcomers.
- ❑ Provides an opportunity to maximize the assets and potential of newcomers.



Community and Health Services Committee/ September 14, 2011

Slide 16