

YORK REGION IMMIGRATION SETTLEMENT STRATEGY

Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) initiative

(CONFIDENTIAL DRAFT)



Funded by:



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York Region Local Immigration
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Highlights

YORK REGION IMMIGRATION SETTLEMENT STRATEGY

The York Region Immigration Settlement 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. The Strategy sets out priorities that contribute to the overall well-being of newcomers living in York Region and can be used to inform future planning and effective use of resources.

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

Almost 2,000 stakeholders including newcomers, long-term residents, community leaders, organizations, agencies and groups, local municipalities, employer networks and planning tables from across York Region participated in community consultations that formed the basis for many of the directions in the Strategy.

LONG-TERM VISION FOR NEWCOMERS LIVING IN YORK REGION

A community that is welcoming and inclusive – a community that openly receives newcomers, promotes social equity and is cohesive. 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 for three year action plan

- Support the continued development of the community hub model or one stop approach for services that help coordinate the delivery of services and avoid duplications (i.e. the Welcome Centres).
- Build capacity of community to be welcoming, inclusive and equitable through partnerships, adequate resources, community awareness and acceptance.
- Continued and improved 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 issue of language barriers and its impact on all areas of integration.

Newcomers are economically integrated – newcomers strive and are succeeding in the labour market, have a job that matches 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 for 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" experience
- Support newcomer entrepreneurs
- 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 for a three year action plan

- Meet the individual needs of newcomers and provide a continuum of supports.
- Newcomers are connected and live in safe communities.
- Mental health challenges of newcomers are addressed.
- Newcomers are actively involved in their local community or neighbourhood.
- Newcomer women have dedicated social support programs focussed on their needs.
- Newcomer seniors access and are aware of supports and services available to them.
- 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 and feel a part of Canadian culture and 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 for a three year action plan

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

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

Priorities for a three year action plan

- Promote and monitor diversity among leadership roles within organizations and institutions.
- Increase skill building and learning opportunities through volunteerism.
- Newcomers understand rights and responsibilities so that they become actively engaged and civically minded residents of Canada.
- Organizations commit and practice values of equity and diversity.
- Strengthen relationship between policing services, justice system, government and political system among newcomer communities.

DEVELOPING A THREE ACTION PLAN

The Community Partnership Council will develop a three year action plan to implement the priorities set out in the Strategy. Action planning will include identifying indicators, key partners, engaging the community and gaining commitment from funders, organizations, businesses, etc. to the community results, and also identifying potential funding opportunities.

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

MESSAGE FROM YORK REGIONAL COUNCIL

[Placeholder]

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL

[Placeholder]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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 gratefully acknowledge the input and participation of various community stakeholders through our consultations including newcomers, long-term residents, community leaders, 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 funding by the Government of Canada through Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

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

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

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INTRODUCTION

The York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy developed through the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) initiative to increase coordination of settlement services, improve labour market integration, and build York Region’s capacity to be a welcoming community. The Strategy sets the long-term vision of the overall wellbeing of newcomers and long-term residents of York Region and sets short-term priorities for actions. These priorities can be used to inform program and service planning, organizational development and resource allocation that enhance the integration of newcomers.

The Successful integration of newcomers has enormous impacts on the community’s quality of life and its ability to compete in the 21st century. In recognizing this, the Strategy provides a framework for all community stakeholders to engage and take action towards creating an inclusive community where all residents including newcomers can succeed.

BACKGROUND

York Region has a history of collaboration

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

In 2005, through the former Human Services Planning Coalition (HSPC), the Region in collaboration with key community stakeholders launched the Inclusivity Action Plan (IAP), as 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 the Vaughan’s Welcome Centre and York Region Immigration Portal. The HSPC has now evolved into Human Services Planning Board of York Region with a mandate to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of human services in York Region through capacity building in the human services sector and collaborative advocacy.

The IAP successfully engaged leading service organizations in York Region who serve the immigrant communities. Through the success of initiatives such as IAP, York Region has built capacity to support, lead and participate in collaborative planning and ultimately to take the lead on immigration planning with key community stakeholders through the Local Immigration Partnership initiative.

In response to the rapid growth and diversity, Community 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.

~Community and Health Services Multi-Year Plan (2010)

In its report, “Best Practices in Settlement Services” (March, 2010), 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

The Region was appointed to lead the York Region LIP initiative

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

A Community Partnership Council was appointed to develop York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy. The Community Partnership Council consists of up to 25 sector representatives including: Regional and local municipalities, settlement services, language training, school boards, Francophone community, employer networks and labour market development, academia, police services and community services. In addition, there are four ex-officio members from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Service Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

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

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.

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, immigrants are critical to competing globally, growing economically and developing 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 in the global age. By 2011, it is estimated that immigration will account for 100 per cent of Canada's net labour force growth¹. It is crucial that newcomers are integrated as quickly as possible into fabrics of our communities and contribute to high quality of life enjoyed by all York Region residents.

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

~Aging Workforce Study, York Region Economic Development Department

A recent study by Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) found that:

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

~*Why Employers Hire Immigrants* (2011), TRIEC

The 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 successful integration. The delivery of services that support newcomers is managed through strategic partnership of the three levels of governments and non-governmental organizations in our community.

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 Immigration Settlement Strategy is influenced, built on and supported by various Regional, Provincial and Federal Strategic Plans.

Underutilization of newcomers accounts for a loss of between \$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 from their individual perspectives. No one organization alone can achieve this. It is important to identify and engage all those who play a role in creating a community that is welcoming and inclusive. With this realization, York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy has been developed in a framework of partnership with community stakeholders, long-term residents, newcomers and all levels of government including federal, provincial, regional and local municipalities.



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, and can help individuals on a path to higher skill training and employment.

Service Canada

The Working in Canada Web site (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. The web site can assist individuals who are searching for work or looking to make career decisions.

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

Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy

Aims to understand, identify, and eliminate the biases, barriers, and power dynamics that limit students' prospects for learning, growing, and fully contributing to society.

This Strategy recognizes the need for school boards to work with partners in order to remove these barriers and 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

Creating a welcoming community in local municipalities

In York Region, there are nine local municipalities that play a key role in supporting newcomer integration through various municipality-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 Program
- Whitchurch-Stouffville Library's initiative on Board
- 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

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 the 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 screened at venues in every municipality. Film Festival partners include municipalities, agencies, local groups and the corporate sector.

Key connections of Regional Plans to creating a welcoming and inclusive community

Various Regional Plans and initiatives including the following contribute to creating a welcoming and inclusive community for all residents of York Region. York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy also contributes to making York Region inclusive for all residents with a focus on the newest members of our community.



“LENS” USED TO DEVELOP THE STRATEGY

Purpose

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 partnership of stakeholders. 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 with measurable outcomes that can be used by the community to evaluate its progress.

Principles

The principles, along with the objectives of the Local Immigration Partnership initiative serve as the lens through which York Region Immigration Settlement 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. Centred on the newcomer 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 including settlement, mainstream and informal supports that promote newcomer integration.
5. Proactive and responsive to increasingly complex and diverse needs of stakeholders through leadership, innovation and enhanced communication.
6. A viable plan with realistic goals and achievable outcomes with a commitment to continuous monitoring and improvement.
7. A framework for local planning founded on shared responsibility and individual accountability and developed through a transparent and collaborative process.

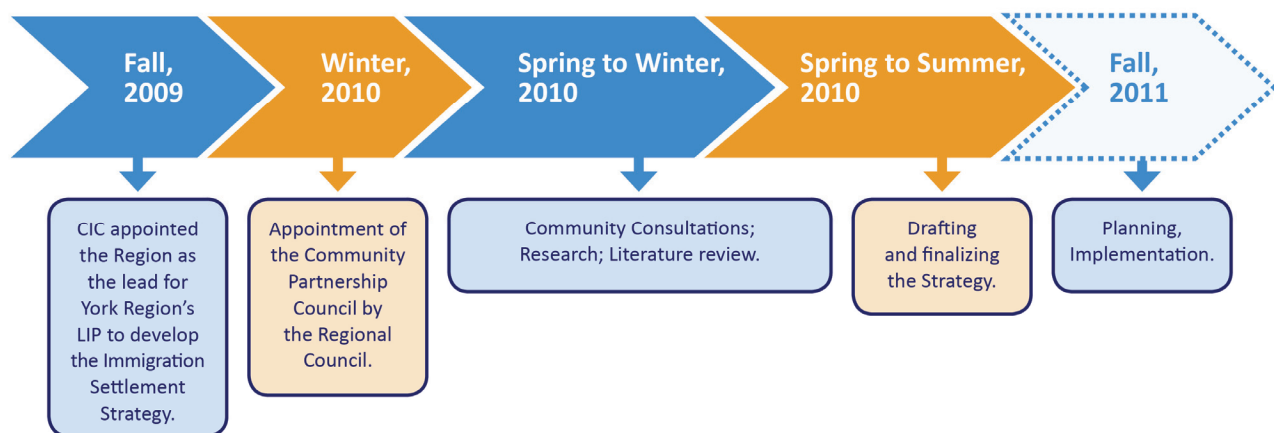
COLLABORATIVE PLANNING PROCESS: A FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Close to 2000 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, organizations, agencies and groups, local municipalities, employer networks and planning tables from across York Region that participated in community consultations that formed the basis for many of the directions in the Strategy.

The purpose of these consultations was to engage various community perspectives 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, *Consultation Summary Report: Findings of Community Consultations and Literature Review for the Development of the York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*.



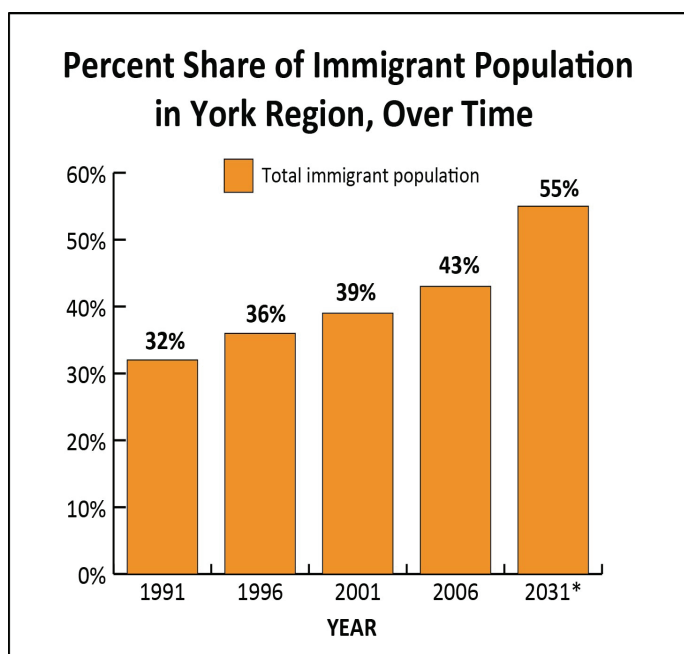
YORK REGION'S CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

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 stretching 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

- About 43 per cent of York Region's residents were born outside of Canada.⁵ Almost 47,000 newcomers arrived in York Region between 2001 and 2006.⁶ On average, York Region receives 10,000 newcomers per year making it the third-largest recent immigrant population in Ontario. A detailed look at the socio-economic profile of newcomers living in York Region is provided in the report, *Changing Landscape: 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%) of York Region's total population.⁷
- Between 2001 and 2009, York Region has seen a seven per cent increase in the number of immigrants directly landing from their country of origin, whereas Toronto has seen a decrease of 27 per cent.⁸



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Custom Tabulation
* York Region Planning and Development Services Department

Who are the newcomers living in York Region?

- Newcomers that immigrate to York Region are from all over the world. In 2006, top five newcomers come from China (20%), India (10%), Iran (9%), South Korea (7%), and Russia (6%). 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, which can be a window of opportunities to the global markets.

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 (September, 2010)

- Newcomers that are arriving in York Region are highly educated. About 50 per cent of newcomers have a certificate, diploma or bachelors degree or higher. As the economy continues to move towards becoming knowledge-based, the highly educated immigrant population will be a strong asset that would help both maintain a vibrant local economy and provide York Region a competitive advantage globally.
- The ability to speak English impacts all aspects of integration and access to services. The percentage of newcomers with no official language ability increased from 11 per cent in 2001 to 14 per cent in 2006. This requires a balanced approach in making English language training available and accessible to as many newcomers as well as providing appropriate interpretation services to increase access to information and prevent further social isolation and vulnerability.
- In 2006, 98% of York Region’s newcomers lived in the Markham, Richmond Hill, Vaughan, Newmarket and Aurora. However Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan continue to have the higher concentration of newcomers.

The landscape and the social fabric of York Region are changing. The 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.

Fact:

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

- Chinese
- Russian
- Farsi
- Korean
- Tamil

~2006 Census, Statistics Canada

Need to strengthen community capacity to support the rapid growth in York Region

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

The community consultations findings identified that many organizations’ capacity does not meet current needs due to funding not keeping pace with the population growth. Thus, many organizations struggle in not being able to proactively plan for the growth. The recent funding cut in the settlement sector in Ontario has further impacted the organizations’ capacity to serve newcomers.

Newcomers bring many assets, opportunities and more importantly the determination to succeed in their new communities. When newcomers are supported by a welcoming and inclusive community, they are able to participate, contribute and increase 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*

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.

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.

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

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. Also, below are some examples of more specific and recent developments in York Region.

1. Welcome Centres

Welcome Centres are one-stop multi-service centres where immigrants and newcomers can access a number of services under one roof including settlement and integration services, language training, accreditation and qualifications assistance, and employment supports. The Welcome Centres are located in Markham, Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Newmarket as well as a mobile unit. This was conceived as a model in York Region and is regarded as a promising practice.

2. NOW (Newcomer Orientation Week) Program

Newcomer Orientation Week (N.O.W) is a one-week orientation program geared towards newly arrived high school students and ESL Grade 9 students to help them adapt easily to their new school system. The NOW Program, students learn from other students, make friends, and are empowered to begin the school year from a position of strength.

3. Learn, Speak, Live

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

4. Immigrant Information Services

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

5. The Immigrant Youth Centre (IYC)

The Immigrant Youth Centre (IYC) opened in March, 2010 in Markham and is the first facility dedicated to serving new immigrants aged 13 to 24 in York Region. 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 and make use of: drop-in lounge, computer lab audio/ visual studio, multipurpose room for workshops and seminars, full kitchen, and job board.

COMMUNITY RESULTS AND PRIORITIES

The Immigration Settlement Strategy is built on a framework of community results, priorities, and an implementation plan that will move the Strategy from “talk to action”. It begins with a vision for future York Region, which are defined by **community results**. These community results are community’s desired future state.

Then, it works backwards to developing the *means* to reach the *end*. These are the **priorities** for three years that help address the community challenges and contribute to advancing the community results. The priorities contribute to achieving the desired community results (i.e., end state) by addressing the community concerns/issues.

The community results of the Immigration Settlement Strategy strive to create a welcoming and inclusive community for all residents

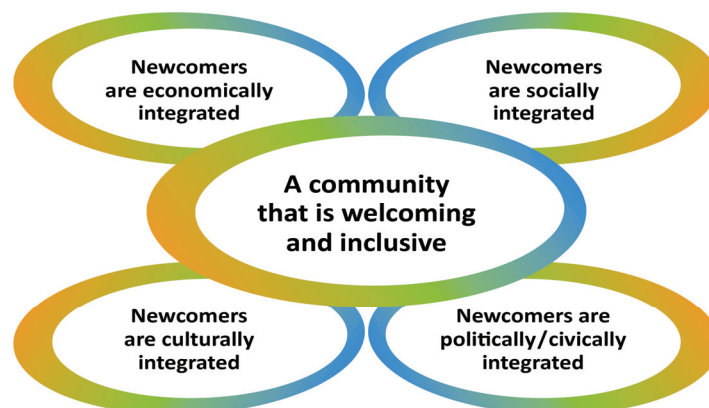
Fundamental to the Immigration Settlement Strategy has been developing an understanding of what successful integration translates to in real life – based on consultations, research and discussions with the Community Partnership Council members. We have defined five community results of the Strategy based on this understanding.

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

The results that the Strategy strives for is a welcoming and inclusive community for all residents of York Region, where newcomers are able to participate fully economically, socially, culturally and politically/civically.



Community Result: A Community that is Welcoming and Inclusive

A community that openly receives newcomers promotes social equity and is cohesive. 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 in terms of language, eligibility requirements, transportation, location of services and costs. Community acceptance and stereotypes are factors that impact newcomers' sense of belonging, ability to participate and move along the pathways to integration.

In York Region, informal supports (e.g. 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 three year action plan

- **Support the continued development of the community hub model or one stop approach for services that help coordinate the delivery of services and avoid duplications (i.e. the Welcome Centres).**
- **Build capacity of community to be welcoming, inclusive and equitable through partnerships, adequate resources, community awareness and acceptance.**
- **Continued and improved 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 issue of 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

Supporting Data

Approximately 10,000 newcomers land directly to York Region each year.⁹ Immigrants landing directly in York Region increased by 7% between 2001 and 2009 representing approximately 32% of York Region's growth.¹⁰

Language:

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

Public Transit use:

- In 2001, 18% of newcomers used public transit to get to work; in 2006, this increased to 20%.¹²

Community capacity:

- 44% of survey respondents identified that newcomer's needs exceeded capacity of York Region programs/services on a regular basis.¹³

Community attitude:

- 55% of Ontario residents feel that immigration is having a negative effect on their community. Only Alberta is higher at 56%.¹⁴

What we have: Slap Shot – Community Alliance for York Region Education

An after-school hockey program teaching low income and newcomer children Canada's national game. Provides opportunity otherwise unavailable and 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

An informal group of women who speak Spanish throughout the region to 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 a job that matches 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 being deskilled and have been hardest hit by the current recession. Prolonged under or unemployment can lead to deskilling, seriously affecting their prospects of re-entering the profession. This has a major impact on our local economy and our ability to remain competitive.

Priorities to guide 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" experience**
- **Support newcomer entrepreneurs**
- **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, includes brochures, fact sheets, and information on both government and corporate services and supports available to newcomers in the York Region.

What we have: Maintenance Electro Mechanic Program (MEMP) - 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 engage resources and immigrant employment organizations for recruitment, integration, training or leadership and recognition opportunities.

Supporting Data

Employment:

- In 2006, 60% of York Region's newcomers and 37% of Canadian-born with a university degree worked in jobs requiring less than university degree.¹⁵
- In GTA, newcomers had approx. 35,000 net job losses and Canadian-born had a net job gain of approximately 4,700.¹⁶
- August 2010, the unemployment rate for newcomers (those who landed within the last five years) in Ontario was 20.1% compared to 8.3% for Canadian-born.¹⁷

Income of newcomers in York Region:

- It takes fifteen years before an immigrant makes close to the same amount of income as a Canadian born resident.¹⁸
- Low income rate for newcomers is increasing. In 2001, the number of newcomers below the low income cut-off was 27% and in 2006 it was 32%; whereas in 2006 for Canadian-born, it was 7%.¹⁹

Housing affordability:

- In 2006, 35% of newcomers and 10% of Canadian-born residents spent more than 50% of their income on housing.²⁰

Employers:

- York Region's employers will soon experience labour shortages due to the aging workforce. Twenty-five percent of York Region's workforce will retire in the next 5 – 10 years.²¹
- Close to 50% of York Region employers were rated either fair or poor at utilizing the skills and knowledge of newcomers.²²

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.

“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

The Current Experience

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

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

Priorities to guide three year action plan

- **Meet the individual needs of newcomers and provide a continuum of supports.**
- **Newcomers are connected and live in safe communities.**
- **Mental health challenges of newcomers are addressed.**
- **Newcomers are actively involved in their local community or neighbourhood.**
- **Newcomer women have dedicated social support programs focussed on their needs.**
- **Newcomer seniors access and are aware of supports and services available to them.**
- **Newcomer youth feel welcome and receive the support they need to excel.**

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.

“Looking at integration outcomes from the perspective of immigrant women’s familial roles highlights the need to focus on the family unit, rather than the individual to fully understand and properly address issues related to the integration of immigrant women”. ~ Vanderplaet, M. (2007). Integration Outcomes for Immigrant Women in Canada: A Review of the Literature 2000-2007

Supporting Data

Feeling at home in York Region:²³

- 27% of newcomers feel either sometimes, rarely or never at home in their community.
- Within the initial months of landing, 52% of newcomers “always” feel at home. After being here 3-5 years, this drops to 42%.
- For newcomers, the top three reasons to live in York Region are to be close to family, close to school and good living environment.

Health and well-being:

- Across Canada, newcomers experience a deterioration of the health after landing in Canada.²⁴

Community Involvement

- Across Canada, newcomers were more likely than the Canadian-born to become inactive in leisure time.²⁵

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

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

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.

Community Result: Newcomers are culturally integrated

Newcomers have and seize opportunities to be actively engaged and feel a part of Canadian culture and 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.

*"I feel like I lost myself when I came to Canada."
-Woman Newcomer Focus Group Participant*

The Current Experience

Newcomers from the same ethnic origin tend to live in the same communities however; newcomers have expressed that 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 of their cultural communities when living in enclaves and many newcomers did not feel understood by other communities. Adjusting to cultural integration is a significant part of settlement and integration process.

Priorities to guide three year action plan

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

Supporting Data

Ethnic group concentrations:

Cultural groups tend to live in the same community. We can see the pattern through identifying the most common place of birth in the local municipality:²⁶

- Aurora –South Korea (10%)
- Markham –China (29%)
- Newmarket –China (12%)
- Richmond Hill –Iran (22%)
- Vaughan –Russian Federation (11%)

Cross-cultural understanding/awareness:

The Community Survey for the Immigration Settlement Strategy identified that for new immigrants and long- term residents to live together successful and will be necessary to:

- Provide opportunities for new immigrants to become actively involved in their community (ranked highest by 56% of respondents)
- Learn about each other's cultures was ranked the second highest (55% survey respondents),and
- Understanding and celebrate diversity in communities was ranked third highest (39% survey 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: Mentoring Across Ages and Cultures,

Big Brothers Big Sisters of York

Recent immigrant and low income children are assisted in adapting to a new environment using mentors who can relate culturally and speak the same language to adapt to their new home in their new communities.

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

Provides region-wide supports for multicultural families by offering parenting classes for fathers, parents and grandparents, new and expecting parents, and parents of teenagers in several languages.

What we have: Peace Tree Day

Peace Tree Day is celebrated in York Region on June 1 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 policing services, political and justice systems. Newcomers take active roles in community building and are represented in 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 getting involved in communities varies depending on 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 hinder their participation in becoming active in the community.

Priorities to guide three year action plan

- **Promote and monitor diversity among leadership roles within organizations and institutions.**
- **Increase skill building and learning opportunities through volunteerism.**
- **Newcomers understand rights and responsibilities so that they become actively engaged and civically minded residents of Canada.**
- **Organizations commit and practice values of equity and diversity.**
- **Strengthen relationship between policing services, justice system and political system among newcomer communities.**

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, Specialized Training.

Supporting Data

Citizenship:

- In 2001, 30% of newcomers became Canadian citizens; and in 2006, this dropped to 25%.²⁷

Voter turn-out rate:

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

- In 2004, voting rate in Ontario was 61%; in Markham-Unionville riding it was 56%; in 2006, voting rate in Ontario was 65% and in Markham-Unionville it was 62%.²⁸

Rights and responsibilities as a resident of Canada:

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

- 16% of respondents identified that information on the legal system and the rights and responsibilities as a Canadian citizen is one of the top needs for newcomers.
- 30% of respondents identified that access to information on the legal system and rights and responsibilities will help with newcomers and long term residents live together successfully.

Diverse leadership/representation:

In 2010, in the GTA, only 14% of community leaders are visible minorities, when visible minorities make up about 50% of the population.²⁹

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

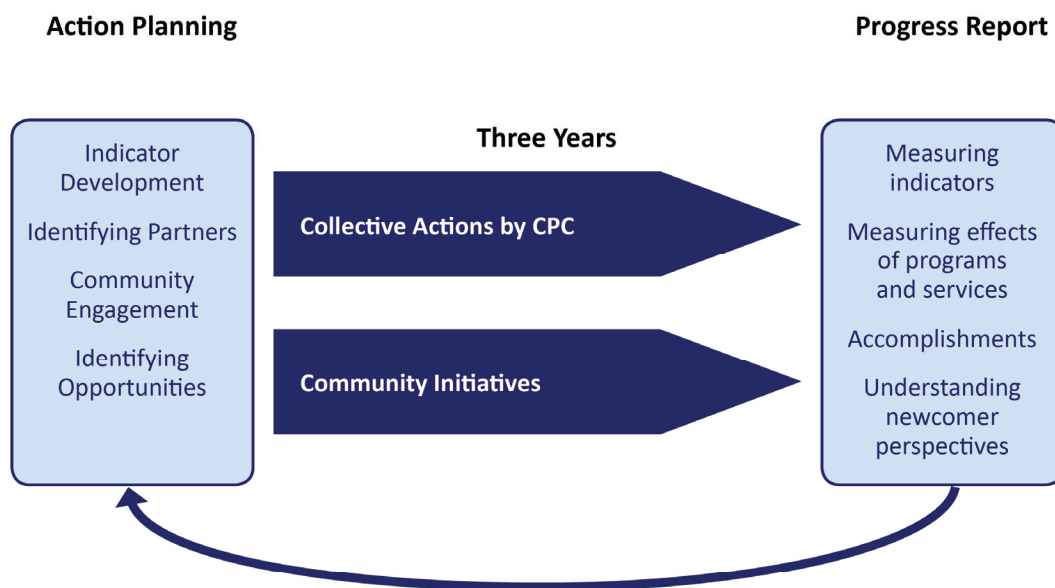
A key building block for the implementation of the York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy is the recognition that success depends on collaborative efforts, strong partnerships and commitment to actions from the entire community. The Strategy development process involved the community extensively in harnessing input and ideas as well as building collaborative partnerships in the community.

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

~ Federation of Canadian Municipalities

The Community Partnership Council, which brings together multi-sectoral representatives, will be instrumental in the implementation of the Strategy and in advancing the community results of the Strategy. 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. For this to occur successfully, the community including each of the stakeholders has a role in providing a welcoming and inclusive environment.

Developing an Action Plan



Indicators will determine course of action

Indicators will help us know how we could recognize the desired condition of well-being, and how we can know if we are making progress. Without indicator data, we are left to argue about perceptions and anecdotes. If we are determined about improving the conditions of well-being for newcomers, then we must be resolute about using qualitative and quantitative data to steer our decisions/actions and assess our progress.

Below is a set of indicator areas per community result that will drive the development of the action plan.

Result	Indicator Areas
Newcomers are economically integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employment• Financial stability• Economic contribution
Newcomers are socially integrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Language proficiency and learning• Safety and security• Social connections• Health and wellness
Newcomers are culturally integrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cross-cultural understanding and respect• Cultural celebrations• Participation of newcomers in community arts, cultural, recreational and leisure activities
Newcomers are civically and politically integrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awareness and understanding of rights and responsibility• Newcomers understanding, connectedness and trust in police services, justice system, government services, and the political system• Newcomers involvement/participation and diverse representation in leadership
A community that is welcoming and inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community attitude towards newcomers• Support for newcomers and the organizations that support them• Support for diversity and cultural inclusion

Data that helps identify a baseline will be established for each indicator area. The baseline for indicators will provide us with a trend for the respective condition. We would be looking to identify what we can do to impact the indicator area trend. Where we can do better both individually and collectively to flatten the trend, slow the trend or turn the trend in a more positive direction.

Planning action to make a difference in the community

A three-year Action Plan will be developed, which identify actions that have the maximum chance of improving community results as per the indicators chosen. They will be guided by what works, resources available, and include the contributions of many partners. This includes exploring the roles of funders in supporting the integration of newcomers beyond the initial stage of settlement.

The community results, priorities and actions of the Strategy are to provide a direction to the York Region community for the successful integration of newcomers. By achieving this, newcomer residents can, along with longer term residents, contribute to the overall quality of life of all York Region residents.

Action planning will take an asset-based approach, which will harness the energy and assets of the community and build on what's already working in terms of supporting the integration of newcomers in York Region. It is important to connect, coordinate and leverage these assets in order to maximize capacity to meet the needs of newcomers.

Community partners are fundamental to success

The Immigration Settlement Strategy is a community plan founded on shared responsibility and community ownership. In essence, our principle *"shared responsibility and individual accountability"* must guide the implementation of the Strategy. This means that no one organization or stakeholder is solely responsible for the implementation of the Strategy or the achievement of the community results. All community stakeholders have a part in this process. The Region is committed to continuing to take the lead in creating awareness in the community about the importance in integrating newcomers and in facilitating and coordinating collaborative contributions from all stakeholders in advancing the community results of the Immigration Settlement Strategy.

Monitoring progress and reporting

After three years, the Community Partnership Council will report on the community's progress in advancing the community results using indicators. The progress report will use the 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 are they making a difference towards the community results; and highlight what we've accomplished over three years. We will revisit the Action Plan and determine any changes or improvements required to the course of action.

Moving forward: Strengthening our community together

Successful integration is a two-way street that requires the strength and commitment of both newcomers and York Region's community organizations agencies and long-term residents. The York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy provides a foundation to build a strong, welcoming and inclusive community that supports newcomer integration and enhance 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 and guide the future direction for the successful integration of newcomers living in our communities.

End Notes

¹ 2001 Census Analysis Series, “The Changing Profile of Canada’s Labour Force”, Statistics Canada, 2003.

² Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

³ Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

⁴ Regional Municipality of York Planning and Development Department

⁵ Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

⁶ Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

⁷ Regional Municipality of York Planning and Development Department

⁸ Citizenship and Immigration Canada Landing Data

⁹ Citizenship and Immigration Canada Landing Data

¹⁰ Citizenship and Immigration Canada Landing Data

¹¹ Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

¹² Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

¹³ Survey of Supports for New Immigrants

¹⁴ Angus Reid Poll, September, 2010

¹⁵ Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

¹⁶ Labour Force Survey (October 2008 – October 2009)

¹⁷ Labour Force Survey, August 2010

¹⁸ Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

¹⁹ Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

²⁰ Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

²¹ Aging Workforce Study program, Regional Municipality of York

²² Community Survey for the Immigration Settlement Strategy

²³ Newcomer Survey for the Immigration Settlement Strategy

²⁴ National Population Health Survey

²⁵ National Population Health Survey

²⁶ Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

²⁷ Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

²⁸ Elections Canada

²⁹ A Snapshot of Diverse Leadership in the GTA, 2010, Diversecity Counts