

YORK REGION LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP: IMMIGRATION SETTLEMENT STRATEGY

SEPTEMBER 2011





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



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Virginia Hackson
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Township of King



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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.

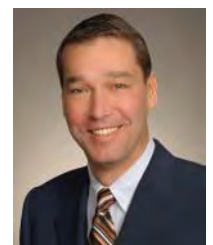
York Regional Council thanks the Government of Canada for providing funding for the Local Immigration Partnership initiative and appreciates the efforts of the Community Partnership Council and the many dedicated partners who helped develop this Strategy. The future success of this plan depends on continued 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.

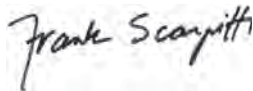
The Community Partnership Council is proud to present its York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy. It advocates a proactive and inclusive approach to helping newcomers establish a sense of belonging in York Region, and by extension strengthen the overall fabric of the community where we live and 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 2011/2012

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

Ex-Officio Members

Richard Lecours, Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Catherine Campbell, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration

Sandy McMillan, Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

Leigh Reynolds, Service Canada

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:

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Community and Health Services
Department

Strategic Service Integration
and Policy Branch

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Local Immigration Partnership initiative

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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.

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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

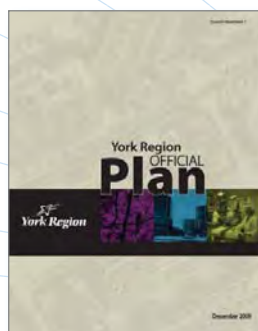
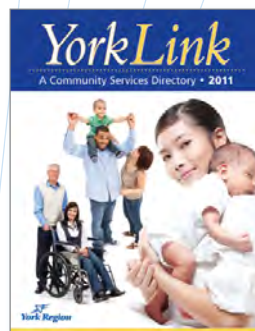
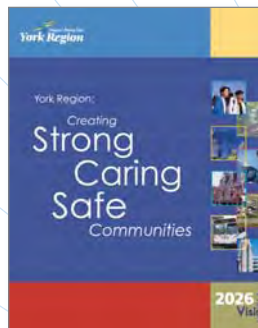
The Vaughan Community Health Centre is a not-for-profit organization that provides primary healthcare and social services to residents, including newcomers, of the City of Vaughan.

What we have: The Multimedia Film Festival of York Region

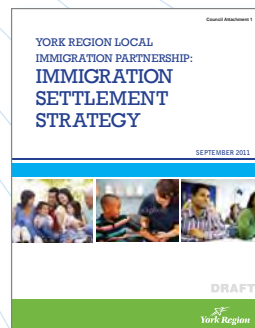
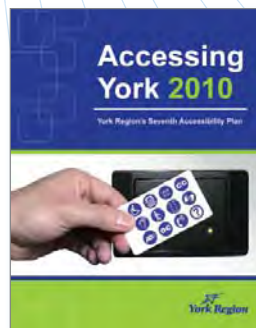
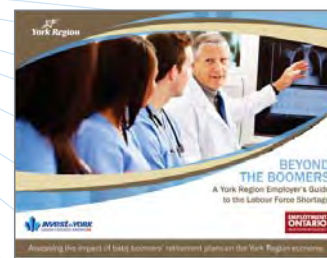
The Multimedia Film Festival of York Region is an annual digital photo/film festival that gives voice to the experience of cultural diversity. Entries are screened at venues in every municipality. Film Festival partners include municipalities, agencies, local groups and the corporate sector.

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

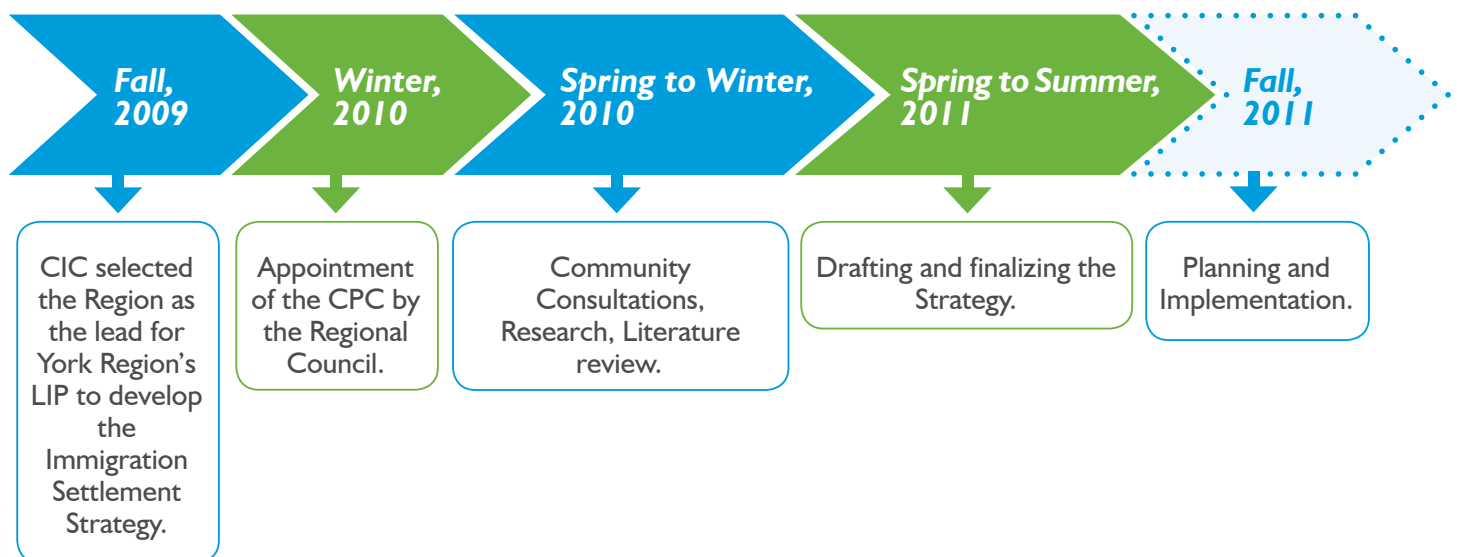
*Close to 2,000 stakeholders were engaged
in the Strategy development process*

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

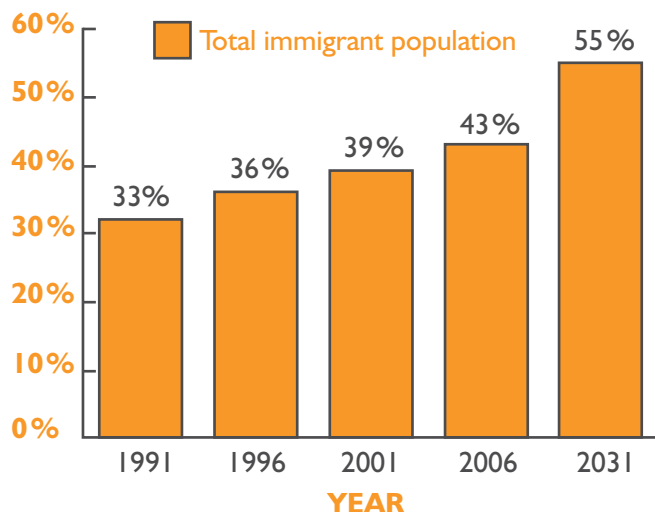
- In 2006, about 43 per cent of York Region's residents were born outside of Canada.⁵ About 46,000 newcomers arrived in York Region between 2001 and 2006; this is the third-largest newcomer population in Ontario.⁶ On average, 10,000 – 12,000 newcomers land in York Region each year.⁷ A detailed look at 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
- Multi-cultural identity
- 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.

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.

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

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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