

# Building Welcoming Communities: Advocating for the Attraction and Retention of Newcomers

## 1. GETTING STARTED

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### Introduction: Global Trends that Call for the Attraction of Newcomers

According to the United Nations Population Division, the world's population is predicted to stop increasing, stabilize and then decline relatively rapidly approximately mid-way through the 21st century (2009). Canada is demonstrating similar population trends within this global context. Currently, Canada is experiencing a decline in fertility rates below the rate that population replacement requires (National Working Group on Small Centre Strategies, 2007). According to some predictions, death rates will equal birth rates in Canada by 2020, and population growth thereafter will depend entirely upon immigration. According to a study recently release by Statistics Canada entitled "Projections of the Diversity of the Canadian Population" the diversity of the population in Canada will continue to grow for at least the next two decades (Malenfant, Éric Caron; Lebel, André and Laurent Martel, 2010). Estimates suggest that by 2031 the foreign-born population of Canada could increase four times faster than the rest of the population (Malenfant, Éric Caron; Lebel, André and Laurent Martel 2010). Furthermore, it is estimated that immigration is increasing Canada's population five times faster than the birth rate, and by 2011 immigration will account for 100% of labour force growth (Malenfant, Éric Caron; Lebel, André and Laurent Martel, 2010).

These global and national population trends will impact communities across Canada. Small communities will be particularly affected as they struggle to maintain a healthy population while fertility rates decline and death rates increase. This is further compounded by the fact that the majority of people who immigrate to Canada settle in one of the three largest municipalities – Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. In 2006, the Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver census metropolitan areas were home to 68.9% of recent immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2007). This trend, combined with recent concerns regarding the economic decline of some of the less populated municipalities in Canada, has created a push for increased responsibilities for issues related to immigration in municipal governments. Consequently, small municipalities are taking action to increase their capacity to attract and retain newcomers to their communities (Thurston, 2008). These efforts are important because immigration contributes to the long-term growth and sustainability of communities. The communities that will be most successful will be those that provide a wide range of accessible services, a safe and welcoming environment, strong public institutions such as schools and hospitals, and opportunities for meaningful employment.

1.1

## The Local Context: Why Attraction and Retention is Important for Peterborough

Attracting and retaining newcomers is particularly important for Peterborough. Firstly, in terms of attraction, Peterborough has a particularly older population and workforce, thereby making demographic and economic issues more pronounced. Furthermore, studies suggest that Peterborough may be experiencing a “migratory” or “urban” shift since increased numbers of newcomers have moved to Peterborough from urban centres such as Toronto and Durham in the last decade (PSPC and TCCBE, 2010).

	CITY OF PETERBOROUGH	PETERBOROUGH COUNTY (excl-city of Peterborough)	ONTARIO (not including Toronto and Ottawa)
Increase in Total Population 2001-2006	6.1%	6.4%	5.7%
Increase in Immigrant Population	13.7%	14.0%	10.0%

Source: Statistics Canada Community Profiles 2001 and 2006

While there is a local need to attract newcomers and to harness migration shifts to the Peterborough community, issues of retention must also be addressed. For instance, new immigrants (those who immigrated 2001 – 2004) experience higher incidence of unemployment (18.2%) than their established counterparts in the Peterborough community (PSPC and TCCBE, 2010). Moreover, newcomers experience a significantly lower median and average income (before taxes) than their more established counterparts (\$15, 507 and \$25, 443 respectively) (PSPC and TCCBE, 2010). Also Peterborough’s immigrant community has a significantly lower proportion of racialized (i.e. visible minority) immigrants than the rest of Ontario. According to “The Faces of our Future: Planning for a Diverse Community,” Peterborough City and County is home to 12, 450 immigrants and of this only 3, 210 or 25.1% are visible minorities (PSPC and TCCBE, 2010). This dynamic makes integration issues (e.g. racism, small cultural communities of support) more pronounced locally than elsewhere.

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## Diversity in Peterborough: An Overview

Some businesses are pushing to attract and retain newcomers since immigrants bring many skills, talents, knowledges, forms of creativity and innovations that contribute to new markets and provide a competitive advantage. There has been a long-standing approach to immigration in Canada where immigrants are viewed as beneficial for economic development and for filling labour shortages (Thurston, 2008).

Immigration is critical to Canada’s prosperity; however, newcomers provide several other social and cultural benefits to communities across Canada including:

- increasing cultural diversity and understanding
- increasing opportunities for educational institutions
- contributing to growth in services and community programs
- building stronger networks among community businesses, institutions and organizations
- increasing access to government programs for funding
- contributing to the development of greater collaborative capacity in the community to respond to emerging issues
- increasing the marketability of the community as a tourist destination, and a safe space for international students, visitors and newcomers
- making investments
- volunteering with community organizations

## 2.1

### Newcomer Contributions to Social Service Agencies

While businesses are capitalizing on attracting and retaining new immigrants and communities are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the benefits of newcomers, it is important for agencies and organizations to also recognize the advantages of immigration. Some of the benefits of attracting and retaining new immigrants for agencies and organizations are as follows:

- opportunities for productive engagements between individuals in the agency (co-worker relations and staff-client relations can be enriched)
- contributing to organizational goals by servicing all members of the community protecting against human rights violations
- increasing inclusion
- diversifying the organizational space
- promoting teamwork and creating opportunities to develop interpersonal skills
- contributing to a growth in services and community programs
- increasing access to government programs for funding

## 3

### Retaining Newcomers

Strategies that focus solely on attracting immigrants are not sufficient because newcomers must also be retained. Looking at the retention of immigrants is something that directly affects how the nonprofit sector responds to and includes new Canadians in the delivery of services to the community. Immigrant retention requires a safe, healthy and welcoming community. Retention also largely depends on the availability of meaningful employment opportunities in the fields where immigrants have training and experience. This means that jobs must be available, and employers must be willing to hire immigrants. Retention also depends on access to institutions and the provisions of culturally competent services. This includes the availability of educational facilities, ESL classes and LINC programs. Education must be equitable and schools must be able to welcome and accommodate students with different cultural backgrounds, language abilities and learning styles (National Working Group on Small Centre Strategies, 2007). Other services that must be provided include local immigrant services, and accessible and affordable housing and healthcare

(Thurston, 2008). Finally, retention is impacted by factors such as intercultural awareness, ethno-cultural diversity, and the attitudes of the community towards immigration and immigrants (Thurston, 2008). Racial, cultural, linguistic and experiential differences between residents and newcomers could give rise to racism or other forms of discrimination. Racism and discrimination inhibit the successful integration and retention of new immigrants. As a CPRN study stated, “Recent data suggest that today’s immigrants are facing greater difficulty adjusting to life in Canada than their predecessors. They are experiencing higher than average levels of poverty and unemployment and face difficulty accessing affordable housing and skilled jobs. Racial discrimination and linguistic and professional barriers exacerbate the situation. “These are signs that we are not doing enough to ensure the inclusion of newcomers” (2003).

It is necessary to become familiar with legislation protecting against racism and discrimination. For instance, human rights legislation protects against racism and discrimination in every province and territory in Canada. Many people might assume that their community is free from discrimination, and that everyone is welcome and interactions are friendly. However, racism and other forms of discrimination continue to occur in subtle and systemic ways that often go unreported. It is imperative that a welcoming community goes beyond friendly attitudes and takes an active role in protecting the human rights of all newcomers in all aspects of community living including workplaces, businesses, schools, recreational spaces and neighborhoods. Acceptance and inclusion are key factors in determining whether or not newcomers will successfully integrate into the community.

## 3.1

### Local Factors that Impact Retention Rates

#### Housing

Several newcomers, especially refugees, arrive in Peterborough facing financial constraints that impact their ability to locate appropriate and affordable housing. Barriers to accessing housing are largely tied to the negative attitudes and perceptions of landlords who privilege Western norms including small families, and who require the provision of local co-signers and credit checks for leases (City of Peterborough, 2003).

#### Employment

Employment is the “overriding factor in the decision of immigrants to stay in a smaller community” (Ma, 2009). Lack of Canadian work experience, difficulties faced in having foreign credentials, and the discriminatory attitudes of employers present challenging barriers to finding meaningful employment in the Peterborough community. This is related to the fact that while 22.8 % of Ontarians identify as visible (racialized) minorities, only 2.24% of Peterborough County residents identify this way since Peterborough has the largest proportion of people who identify as being of British ancestry in Canada (Ku, 2009). Therefore, the demographic make-up of Peterborough can pose a considerable barrier to racialized immigrants in finding employment in the community.

#### Language

Education, including ESL training was one of three most requested services by New Canadian Centre clients in 2009 (Taft & Turley, 2010).

### **Transportation**

Clients at the New Canadians Centre and community members have emphasized the importance of transportation services to providing adequate immigration services. Transportation is a more significant issue for the New Canadians Centre of Peterborough than it is for similar agencies in other cities because the New Canadians Centre is the only local settlement service provider and services an exceptionally large area with few transportation options for those living outside of urban areas. This requires either providing service where immigrants are (through the SWIS program), or bringing immigrants to the New Canadians Centre through increased access to public transportation.

### **Social Inclusion**

Alienation and exclusion due to cultural differences from the wider community is a barrier to successful integration of newcomers into the Peterborough community. This includes assumptions made about racialized immigrants from community members as well as a lack of understanding of Canadian customs and laws by newcomers. Several strategies have been identified to achieve the goal of social inclusion including: providing public education on the benefits of immigration; increasing immigrants in various aspects of the community; providing immigrants with opportunities to learn about Canadian cultural norms; and, overcoming “Us and Them” attitudes possessed by both newcomers and community members (Ku, 2009; Taft & Turley, 2010).

While the New Canadians Centre of Peterborough is working tirelessly to address these barriers to retention and integration through educational initiatives, programming and service provision it is the responsibility of all members of the Peterborough community to adequately address the issues that newcomers face. To find out more about the services that the New Canadians Centre offers, please visit their website at <http://www.nccpeterborough.ca/>.

## **4**

### **Building a Welcoming Community**

There is an ethical imperative for attracting, integrating and retaining immigrants. Simply put, welcoming new members into a community is the right thing to do. A welcoming community is one that has a strong desire and commitment to attracting, integrating and retaining newcomers and actively creates an environment in which newcomers will feel at home. A welcoming community also makes sure that newcomers are able to fully participate in all aspects of community life, which involves providing access to a range of services, programs and meaningful employment opportunities (National Working Group on Small Centre Strategies, 2007). In short, a welcoming community respects diversity, has a range of equitable education opportunities, has accessible public services, promotes access to health and wellness, includes newcomers in community events and activities, and respects cultural differences including faiths and spiritualities (National Working Group on Small Centre Strategies, 2007).

## 4.1

### Welcoming and Inclusive Environment

According to Deborah Tunis (2010) from the Integration Branch of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the components which may contribute to a welcoming and inclusive environment for successful newcomer settlement and integration include:

- Employment opportunities
- Accessible, appropriate and affordable housing
- Accessible and available public transit
- Cultural diversity
- Accessible and available public spaces and recreation facilities
- Accessible and suitable health care
- Diverse religious organizations
- Opportunities for social engagement and the formation of diverse networks
- Opportunities for political participation
- Safety and security
- Positive relationships between the community and police services
- An accepting environment (positive attitudes toward immigrants and diversity, including media representation)
- Appropriate immigrant-serving agencies
- Collaboration between actors supporting immigrant integration

## 4.2

### Accessibility Checklist

Communities must also identify and address barriers to public services and facilities in order to be welcoming and to successfully retain newcomers. Below is a basic accessibility checklist for public services, provided by the National Working Group on Small Centre Strategies (2007):

- Mission statement that reflects agency's commitment to serve culturally diverse populations
- Policy and procedure manual that recognizes and makes reference to provision of services to culturally diverse populations
- Promotional and publicity materials that recognize and ensure services are provided to culturally diverse populations and are available in key languages other than English or French
- Staff members and volunteers who have received training in cultural competency
- Staff members and volunteers who speak different languages and/or have specific cross-cultural skills (for example, those familiar with customs in other countries) to assist newcomers when required
- Physical environment of the public service or facility that reflects an inclusive community with culturally representational artwork and pictures on the wall, a welcome sign in several languages, etc.
- Organization accommodates diverse clients in effort to ensure programs and services are available to all (for example, people who cannot eat certain foods in the seniors'

centre cafe due to religious beliefs are offered healthy, tasty and appropriate alternatives) or libraries that offer specialized services to immigrants

- Inviting regular feedback (questionnaire, survey) at least once a year from culturally diverse clients to ensure organization's services are accessible and to identify potential or emerging barriers

When identifying measures to create a welcoming community that successfully attracts and retains newcomers, always be sure to include newcomers in the conversation. Listen to what newcomers have to say, and respect their feedback and the solutions that they propose.

### 4.3

## Advocating for a Welcoming Community from Within

There are many ways in which one can advocate for attraction and retention within the parameters of the workplace, e.g. ensuring diversity in hiring practices and within the workplace through the support of the human resources department. It is also important to recruit diverse clients and provide accessible services that will meet their unique needs.

Many agencies struggle to reach underserved communities. Here are some tips for reaching newcomer clients when they will not seek you out:

- Develop an understanding of the cultural reasons why people might not seek out help or services.
- Make sure that the New Canadians Centre is familiar with your agency and has materials (e.g. pamphlets) available.
- Build partnership and/or have a presence at Casa Maria
- Develop a holistic approach to clients – effective and accessible programs will look at the client in the context of their family and community, e.g. pay attention to newcomers in school and their family members. Family and professional collaboration are the keys to high quality, responsive programs.
- Invite input and participation from newcomers – Welcome contributions, feedback, participation in committees, input on programs and services, and incorporate values and beliefs into service delivery. Service providers and newcomers function better when they feel valued and respected.

If address these barriers well, then as a community we will become known as a welcoming place where people want to come because the services are culturally appropriate and accessible.

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## Local Resources

### **New Canadians Centre**

<http://www.nccpeterborough.ca/>

### **Peterborough Partnership Council on Immigrant Integration**

<http://ppcii.ca/>

### **Workplace Integration Centre**

[www.workplaceintegration.ca](http://www.workplaceintegration.ca)

### **Community and Race Relations Committee of Peterborough**

[www.racerelationspeterborough.org](http://www.racerelationspeterborough.org)

[www.anti-racism.ca](http://www.anti-racism.ca)

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## Additional Resources

### **Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC)**

<http://www.canalliance.org/index.en.stm>

### **Alliance of Sector Councils – Resources on Hiring and Retaining Foreign Trained Professionals**

<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/TASC/resources.aspx>

### **Annotated Bibliography**

<http://atwork.settlement.org/inclusion/research/biblio.asp>

### **Toolkits**

<http://atwork.settlement.org/inclusion/featured/home.asp>

<http://integration-net.ca/english/ini/wci-idca/tbo/index.htm>

<http://www.ohcc-ccso.ca/en/inclusive-community-organizations-a-tool-kit>

### **Canadian Heritage**

<http://www.pch.gc.ca/march-21-mars/>

### **Canadian Human Rights Commission**

<http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/>

### **Centre for Race and Culture**

[http://www.cfrac.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=81&Itemid=267](http://www.cfrac.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=81&Itemid=267)

[http://www.cfrac.com/images/stories/pdf/Karibuni\\_English\\_web.pdf](http://www.cfrac.com/images/stories/pdf/Karibuni_English_web.pdf)

### **Citizenship and Immigration Canada**

<http://www.cic.gc.ca>

### **Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO)**

<http://www.credentials.gc.ca>

### **Integration Net – Toolkit on Healthy Communities**

<http://integration-net.ca/english/offsite.cfm?urlE=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ohcc-ccso.ca%2Fen%2Finclusive-community-organizations-a-tool-kit>

### **List of Immigrant Serving Agencies and Non-Profit Organizations**

<http://www.councils.org/gateway/who-does-what/immigrant-serving-agencies-and-other-non-profit-organizations/>

### **Ontario Network for Internationally Trained Professionals (ONIP)**

<http://www.onip.ca>

### **Projections of the Diversity of the Canadian Population: 2006 to 2031**

[http://www.statcan.gc.ca/cgi-bin/af-fdr.cgi?l=eng&loc=http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-551-x/91-551-x2010001\\_eng.pdf&t=Projections%20of%20the%20Diversity%20of%20the%20Canadian%20Population](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/cgi-bin/af-fdr.cgi?l=eng&loc=http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-551-x/91-551-x2010001_eng.pdf&t=Projections%20of%20the%20Diversity%20of%20the%20Canadian%20Population)

### **Promoting Newcomer Integration and Social Inclusion**

<http://atwork.settlement.org/inclusion/home.asp>

### **Frequently Used Terms**

<http://atwork.settlement.org/inclusion/research/terms.asp>

### **Provincial and Territorial Human Rights Commission**

<http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/links/default-en.asp#provincial>

### **The Newcomers Guide to Housing**

<http://www.cmhc.gc.ca/en/co/buho/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&PageID=93728>

### **The Role of Host Communities in Attracting, Integrating and Retaining Newcomers and Minorities**

[http://im.metropolis.net/research-policy/research\\_content/domaine4\\_en.html](http://im.metropolis.net/research-policy/research_content/domaine4_en.html)

<http://www.skillsforchange.org/>

<http://www.goingtocanada.gc.ca/>

Cook Ross (2004). The Diversity Toolkit. Available at: <http://www.cookross.com/products/toolkit.asp>