

Newcomer Employment Initiatives in Toronto

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To:	Economic Development Committee
From:	General Manager, Employment and Social Services
Wards:	All
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SUMMARY

Toronto is one of the most multicultural urban areas in the world, with residents coming from 188 countries and speaking over 140 different languages. Over half of Toronto's residents are born outside Canada, making it an extremely diverse city. The successful settlement and integration of newcomers depends on a range of socio-economic factors. This report addresses one of these factors – supporting people to find jobs and integrate into the labour market – and outlines current approaches and programs the City is undertaking to support newcomers in Toronto's job market.

This report identifies areas where the City supports newcomers in the labour force, through partnerships with both governmental and community organizations, outlines three strategic frameworks that guide the City's work with newcomers and provides an overview of dominant issues facing newcomers in Toronto.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Toronto Employment and Social Services recommends that:

1. City Council direct the General Manager of Toronto Employment and Social Services to provide an update on newcomer employment initiatives as part of the Workforce Development Strategy progress report, scheduled to be provided to the Economic Development Committee in April 2015.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact associated with this report beyond what has already been approved in the 2014 budget.

Equity Impact

The City of Toronto is committed to providing programs and services that are responsive to the needs of diverse residents. The employment opportunities available to newcomers in Toronto are critical to successful integration. As a priority group for the City's equity, diversity and human rights initiatives, newcomers benefit from targeted programs and services that lead to more equitable outcomes.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on February 20 and 21, 2013, City Council approved the mission, vision and guiding principles contained in the Toronto Newcomer Strategy and endorsed its integration and coordination into the Economic Development plan to facilitate workforce development and ensure equitable opportunities for all residents.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.CD18.7>

At its meeting on April 1, 2, and 3, 2014, City Council adopted "*Workforce Development Strategy – 2013 Progress*." The report directed City staff to continue working on initiatives that support the employment objectives of the Toronto Newcomer Strategy.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.ED29.4>

At its meeting on April 16, 2014, following a panel presentation on "Making Sense of the Skills Gap," the Economic Development Committee directed staff to report back on an employment workshop plan for new Canadians.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.ED30.2>

At its meeting on June 10 and 11, 2014, City Council will consider "*Toronto Newcomer Strategy, 2014-2016 Implementation*." This report provides information and progress updates on a number of City Council decisions, including those related to the implementation of the Toronto Newcomer Strategy, Social Development Open Dialogue Sessions, Integrating Cities Charter, municipal franchise, welfare of immigrant children and access to City services for newcomers. The report highlights major achievements to date, relevant trends and issues, and outlines recommendations for new activities.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.CD29.10>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

According to the 2011 National Household Survey, 49% of Toronto's population in 2011 were immigrants. One third of them are newcomers, having arrived in Canada in the last 10 years. Successfully integrating newcomers provides an opportunity to enrich the city economically, socially and culturally.

While Toronto has a higher proportion of immigrants than other Canadian cities, many of those that decide to choose Toronto as their home are faced with significant barriers.

Toronto's newcomers often struggle to find adequate employment, affordable housing and may have difficulty accessing City and other services.

The City of Toronto's Strategic Actions 2013-2018 guide the priorities of the City for the next 5 years. Strategic Action # 10, "Enhance the City's Quality of Life", includes a commitment to support the collective health and quality of life of people, with a focus on the most vulnerable. One of the ways the City will do this is by:

"Improving newcomers' access to City services, civic engagement and community capacity building through the implementation of the Toronto Newcomer Strategy."

By identifying areas where the City supports and engages newcomers, this report aligns with the City's Strategic Actions. In addition, there are three relevant City strategies that work to support newcomers in the labour force: the Toronto Newcomer Strategy, Collaborating for Competitiveness and the Workforce Development Strategy.

- The City's **Newcomer Strategy**, led by Social Development, Finance and Administration, works to address interconnected issues affecting newcomers and their successful integration. This is done through the advancement of four strategic pillars, cooperation with Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs), and the development of the City's Newcomer Leadership Table. One of four strategic pillars identified in the Newcomer Strategy is "advancing labour market outcomes."
- **Collaborating for Competitiveness**, the City's Strategic Action Plan for Accelerating Economic Growth and Job Creation, led by Economic Development and Culture, emphasizes the ideas, connections and experience that newcomers provide as an advantage for Toronto businesses. Attracting newcomers is critical to the economic success of Toronto and remaining the favoured destination for immigrants is all the more important as the City's population ages.
- **Working as One**, a Workforce Development Strategy for Toronto, led by Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS), works towards creating a more coordinated and effective approach to employment in Toronto. As workforce development is inherently based on partnership and collaboration, the City regularly connects newcomers to a range of employment opportunities through partnerships with employers, settlement organizations and other orders of government. The Strategy aims to fulfill the mutual needs of both job seekers and employers.

In order to better support employment opportunities for newcomers, the City plans, manages and delivers a number of initiatives and programs. However, it does this within the larger context of services and supports that are funded and delivered by other orders of government, as the City does not have carriage of all employment services in Toronto. For example, provincial ministries and federal departments have responsibility for managing and funding certain programs to newcomers. The City is one player in the large employment arena and works collaboratively to support the entrance of newcomers into the labour market.

Within the City, TESS has the primary responsibility for addressing labour force, integration and access to programs for low-income Torontonians, notably OW recipients. With carriage for the Workforce Development Strategy, TESS works in partnership with City divisions/agencies and other levels of government to support newcomers. This report outlines some of the ways the City supports newcomers to enter, re-enter and sustain participation in Toronto's labour market.

COMMENTS

This section takes a two-pronged approach to the challenges facing newcomers, outlining the dominant issues facing newcomers in Toronto's labour market and exploring examples in Toronto of newcomer employment initiatives.

Dominant Issues Facing Newcomers in Toronto's Labour Market

Even in a city as diverse and welcoming as Toronto, immigration can be a challenging experience. Newcomers may be coming from difficult circumstances such as war and violence. Others may arrive from countries with very different political systems, civic institutions and services. To successfully integrate into their new environment, newcomers demonstrate resilience, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit.

Newcomers complement the skills of the domestic labour force, bring new investment and innovative practices, help support increased trade with their countries of origin and enhance cultural diversity. That being said, newcomers face many challenges compared to Canadian-born residents.

Statistics show that a disproportionate number of newcomers in Toronto are either not getting jobs or not getting jobs that match their qualifications. A number of trends have emerged that point to the challenges facing newcomers seeking to enter the labour market in Toronto.

The obstacles to suitable employment for newcomers are abundant and complex. A great deal of work has identified these barriers and challenges. In April 2014, the Mowat Centre and the Intergovernmental Committee for Economic and Labour Force Development (ICE) released a report entitled "Redesigning Collaboration: Opportunities for Innovation in Toronto's Labour Market." This report, and many others¹ identified a number of the challenges facing newcomers, such as language barriers, credential recognition, a lack of soft skills and limited Canadian work experience.

These barriers have led to poor labour market outcomes among newcomers in Toronto, including underemployment, lower incomes relative to Canadian-born residents and precarious or unsustainable employment.

¹ This work includes, among other reports: "The Global City, Newcomer Health in Toronto" by Toronto Public Health, Toronto's Vital Signs Report, Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario.

While the consensus on the existence of a skills gap is mixed, the Mowat Centre found that employers remain unable to find the right talents to fill available jobs. Newcomers may have the skills for these jobs, but still face discrimination in hiring processes and have limited social networks, upon which many people rely for employment opportunities.

Over the past year, labour force indicators for City of Toronto residents, as reported by Statistics Canada, have exhibited a great deal of volatility. This unsteady environment has a particularly strong impact on newcomers, whose challenges finding employment are exacerbated by the high unemployment rate in Toronto, which remains 2% above the Ontario and Canadian totals.

In April 2014, the seasonally adjusted monthly unemployment rate for city residents increased from 9.0% to 9.2%; however, this increase was entirely because more people were attracted to the labour force. The total number of employed city residents increased by 21,000 in April 2014 and the employment to population ratio increased by 0.6%.

The persistently high unemployment rate in Toronto is especially high among new labour market entrants. In Toronto, unemployment rates among youth and newcomers are significantly higher than (and sometimes double) the average, and more are receiving income supports for longer and repeatedly.

In Toronto, there are approximately 90,000 cases on Ontario Works (OW) and roughly 30,000 recipients that rely on Employment Insurance each month. Many of the 9.2% of unemployed Torontonians rely on these programs for income support.

The increasing length of stay for all OW clients (which now exceeds 2 years) clearly demonstrates the challenges OW clients face when sustaining employment. Newcomers, for the purposes of this report defined as being in Canada for 5 years or less, comprised 16.7% of the OW caseload or 13,378 cases in March 2014.² To address both the volatility in Toronto's labour market and the proportion of newcomers on social assistance, the following section outlines the ways the City is taking steps to better support newcomers.

Specific Initiatives to Support Newcomers in Toronto's Labour Force

Because the City is just one player in the large employment services sector, it relies on the support of other orders of government and community partners, while serving as an access and information hub. This section outlines initiatives undertaken by TESS, programs run in partnerships with community agencies, and briefly highlights initiatives led by external organizations or other orders of government. These programs are provided to individuals that fall into 3 categories.

² Note that the "caseload" number does not include spouses or dependents.

1. Employable / close to the labour market, who may be underemployed or unemployed, possessing qualifications and skills that are in demand. An example may be a highly-skilled underemployed internationally trained professional.
2. Moving closer to the labour market, who have gaps in qualifications and capabilities and require more support, career guidance and vocational training. An example may be a skilled newcomer without Canadian labour market experience.
3. Distant from the labour market, who may have multiple self-sufficiency challenges and require intensive services. An example may be a newcomer with literacy issues facing addictions or mental health challenges.

City Services and Initiatives

The City runs 19 Employment Centres (ECs), operated by TESS. Employment Centres offer resources and services to all Toronto residents. Staff will help with career planning, job searching and connect residents to jobs and other education and training services in the community.

Services include:

- coaching and guided job search support, with information on resume writing and interview skills
- access to computers, the internet, printers, books and other printed materials and telephones
- information about:
 - Employment and Social Services' benefits and supports
 - community and government resources
 - career planning
 - business etiquette
 - the labour market
 - volunteering and work experience
 - upgrading your education, post-secondary options and skill training
 - supports for people who are working

Employment Centres offer a series of career development workshops on topics such as:

- Labour Market Information
- Using Social Media to look for work
- Resume and interview preparation.
- How to Apply to the Toronto Public Service
- Financial Literacy
- Settlement services including resources for families, such as supports available on language, education and employment.

Community organizations deliver services onsite at City Employment Centres such as:

- Access Employment – Integrating into the Canadian Labour Market
- Operation Springboard – The Provincial Second Career Program
- Toronto District School Board – Updating Essential Skills
- St. Christopher House – Newcomer Settlement Services

TESS, through service agreements with community organizations, provides skill training and other pre-employment services to social assistance recipients. A Request for Proposal (RFP) process is currently underway for Contracted Employment Services. The division is particularly interested in programs for equity seeking groups and vulnerable populations with different needs and interests. TESS identified newcomers as one of these three priority groups.

TESS works closely with other City divisions to offer innovative programs, including Economic Development and Culture's Enterprise Toronto initiative. This program outlines the process, step-by-step, of starting a business, by providing participants with services that are tailored to meet the needs of entrepreneurs and small business owners. Enterprise Toronto offers year-round learning opportunities for entrepreneurs and small business owners, from regularly scheduled seminars to large annual events like the Small Business Forum.

The division also works with the Toronto Public Library, who provides onsite programs for newcomers, such as English conversation circles, resume writing workshops, settlement assistance and information on newcomer education, health and housing.

As a large employer, the City of Toronto has a responsibility to promote the Toronto Public Service as a model employer through its hiring practices. The City has an ongoing partnership with Career Edge Organization, which matches employers (including the City) with interns, including internationally trained professionals. In 2010, TESS created the Job Incentive Program (JIP), which provides unpaid work experience opportunities in the Toronto Public Service. This enables new immigrants to connect to the labour market, develop new skills, make contacts and learn about the public service. Participants are placed in divisions across the City, providing skill building and experiential work placements.

As a result of the increase in employer-focused services and the number of employers partnering with the City's Employment Centers, services designed for jobseekers are being better informed by the needs and expectations of employers. Networking events are one of these services, as they provide an opportunity for newcomers to informally interact with prospective employers in their fields of expertise and interest. TESS provides forums for newcomers to connect and network with employers. Two of these are highlighted below.

- In partnership with the Centre of Excellence in Financial Services Education and private sector organizations, TESS runs the Financial Services Networking Initiative. This program focuses on internationally trained professionals in finance and accounting, providing participants with the opportunity to network with professionals in their field. Participants learn how to navigate the sector for employment and connect with TESS for advice and guidance. TESS extends ongoing employment related support to participants and actively connects them to relevant employment opportunities.
- In partnership with Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE), Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO), ACCES Employment and Skills for Change, TESS hosts a yearly engineering employment networking event at Metro Hall. Since 2010, this event has evolved from having keynote speakers to a Networking Event with Employers. The event includes an opportunity for Engineers to network/connect with employers in a 'speed networking' format and is open to all educated and trained Engineers regardless of having the credentials to work as a Professional Engineer in Canada.

Education programs allow newcomers to upgrade their skills at accredited institutions and therefore improve employment prospects. Three examples of education programs for newcomers, delivered in partnership with the City and other organizations, are outlined below.

- In partnership with the Daniels Corporation and the University of Toronto's School of Continuing Education, the City provides credential assessments for newcomers in Regent Park with post-secondary degrees. The program helps address the chronic underemployment of internationally trained professionals. Eligible residents receive financial support from the Daniels Corporation to attend continuing education or bridging programs.
- In partnership with Seneca College, York University and the Council of Educators of Toronto, TESS ran an information session on Helping Newcomers Navigate the Education System at Jane and Finch. Information and support was provided on topics relating to college, university, continuing education, trades and apprenticeship programs.
- The Toronto District School Board offers several educational programs for newcomers, including adult high schools, night school and e-learning. ESL programs are available as well as skill development training courses in a variety of areas, such as essential skills upgrading and enhanced language training.

Partnerships with Community Agencies

The City works closely with community agencies to leverage their expertise, experience and support. Two examples of joint programs are outlined below.

- The City of Toronto is a founding employer partner of The Mentoring Partnership, run by TRIEC³, which brings together skilled immigrants and established professionals in occupation-specific mentoring relationships. Mentors share job search tips, industry insights and professional contacts, helping mentees establish a professional network in Canada. The City of Toronto is one of the leading contributors of mentors to The Mentoring Partnership and the first public sector partner to reach the 1,000 mentoring matches milestone since the program began in 2004.
- Jointly with AccessPoint and Neighbourhood Link, the Golden Mile Employment and Social Services Office offers a comprehensive 10-day workshop on a monthly basis focusing on newcomers to Toronto. The goal of the workshop series is to enable and enhance the participants' capacity for obtaining meaningful employment and entering the Canadian labour market.

Initiatives Provided by Other Orders of Government

Federal and provincial partners fund and manage additional employment supports for newcomers. At the City's ECs, residents are able to find information and obtain referrals on all services, including those funded and managed by other orders of government. Some examples are detailed below.

- Employment Ontario (EO), a service of the Government of Ontario, offers many programs tailored to immigrants. EO offers programs and services directly at several offices throughout the City and also funds many agencies, such as Newcomer Women's Services Toronto, to provide specialized and neighbourhood-specific employment supports.
- The Ontario Bridge Training program helps skilled newcomers get their license or certificate in their profession or trade in order to work in the province. Run by the provincial Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, this program helps internationally trained participants find employment commensurate with their skills and experience.
- The Federal Internship for Newcomers (FIN) Program, delivered through the Foreign Credentials Recognition Office of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, provides newcomers with valuable temporary Canadian work experience and training opportunities with federal government departments and agencies and private sector organizations. In addition to gaining Canadian work experience, interns understand hiring processes, network with professionals, attend training sessions and learn about workplace culture.

³ The Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC), a multi-stakeholder council, works to create and champion solutions to better integrate skilled immigrants in the Toronto Region labour market.

- Language skills are a major barrier to finding employment. The Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program, delivered by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, offers advanced language training in French and English to adult permanent residents. LINC assessment centers are located throughout Toronto and both full and part-time classes are available to eligible residents.

CONCLUSION

Going forward, the City will continue to support newcomers through a number of initiatives. TESS' 2014 Request for Proposals for the Purchase of Employment Services identified newcomers as one of three priority groups to obtain and maintain employment or self-employment and/or to move closer to the labour market. The City is also committed to implementing the key employment recommendations from the Newcomer Strategy Implementation report, including offering settlement services onsite in select Employment Centres and promoting business start-up programs to newcomers.

The responsibility of planning, managing and delivering newcomer employment initiatives is a fundamental component of the implementation of the Workforce Development Strategy. Thus, as the Workforce Development lead, TESS will provide an update on these initiatives through the Workforce Development Strategy progress report in spring 2015.

The City is committed to ensuring Toronto remains a leading destination for newcomers by strengthening its programs and services that serve this population.

CONTACT

Phil Eisler
Director, Employment and Social Services
Phone: 416.397.7313
Email: peisler@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Pat Walcott
General Manager, Employment and Social Services