

Toronto North
Settlement and Employment Strategy
October 2012

F I N A L

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Welcoming Toronto's Future

Newcomers to Canada are a vital and integral part of our society. In 2011 labour force growth in Canada was attributed entirely to new immigrant entrants to the labour market. More than half of Toronto's population is comprised of immigrants and their families with a sizeable population of refugee claimants, permanent residents and temporary workers and students increasing the proportion of foreign-born individuals calling Toronto home. Newcomers come from all over the world, and Toronto, with its high proportion of immigrants (second only to Miami in the world) and far greater diversity has often been referred to as the most multi-cultural city in the world.

This tremendous regional accomplishment is overshadowed by increasing rates of poverty among newcomers, declining newcomer health, and increasing social isolation of ethnic enclaves.

Supporting newcomers as they settle and navigate Canadian life, culture, economy and society are critical to reversing these trends and creating more welcoming and supportive receiving environments.

It is in this context that Local Immigration Partnerships were developed, to enhance the coordination of newcomer supports at the local level, and to better inform policy and decision-making at the macro level about opportunities to create integrated, cross-sectoral systems and supports that encourage community-wide participation in settlement and integration.

The Role of Local Immigration Partnerships

Overview

Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) are multi-sectoral planning tables that bring a cross-section of stakeholders together to identify ways in which to support settlement and integration of immigrants into local communities.

LIPs began as a pilot project funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) in Ontario and are supported by incalculable and invaluable in-kind hours and contributions from a broad reach of stakeholders from across sectors including government (all three levels), for-profit, community, funders, academia, and media. LIPs have 4 express objectives:

- Support better coordination in the planning and delivery of integration services across multiple sectors;
- Provide a framework to facilitate collaboration and develop and implement community-based strategic plans;
- Strengthen local integration capacity to foster labour market access, social inclusion, and sustainable welcoming communities;
- Achieve improved outcomes as indicated by increased economic, social political and civic participation by newcomers

Across Ontario, 45 LIPs were rolled out between 2009-2012 focusing on a variety of catchments including 2nd and 3rd tier municipalities, ruralities, metropolitan areas and neighbourhoods in metropolitan areas. LIPs are characterized by a strong and committed membership base and research-backed strategic action plans.

Key steps in the LIP process include¹:

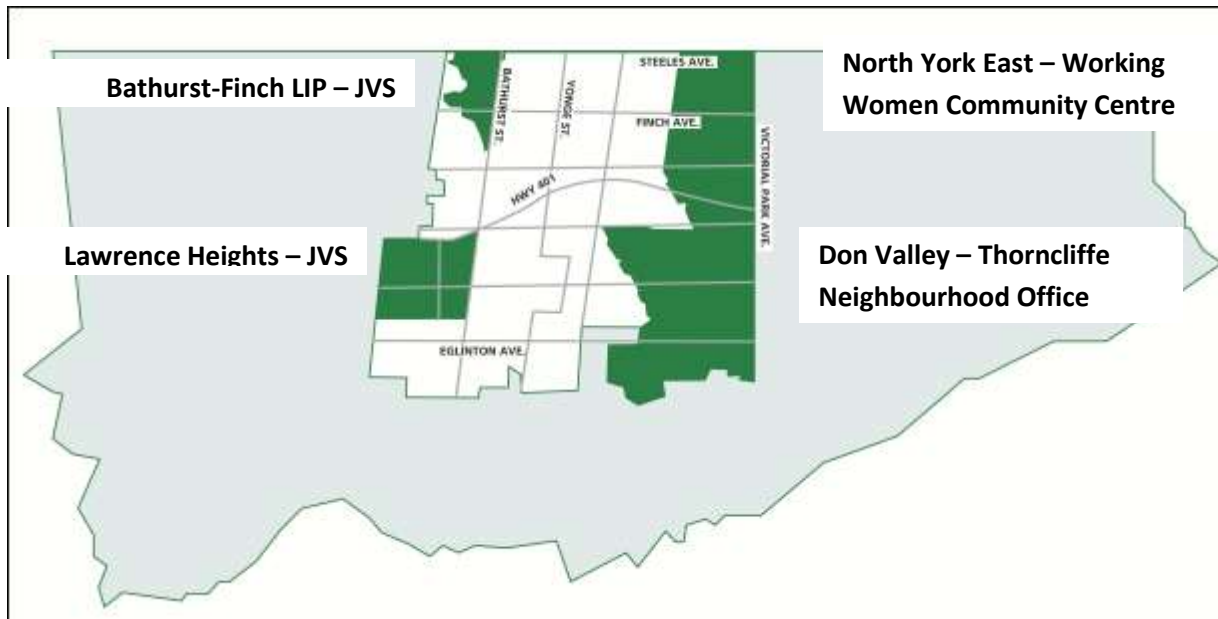
- Establish a partnership council
- Create terms of reference for the partnership council
- Conduct research and establish a local settlement strategy to be implemented over three years.
- Develop an annual action plan that addresses local priorities for that fiscal year.
- Report on implementation of the action plan on an annual basis.

¹ From Burr, Kathleen (2011) “Local Immigration Partnerships: Building Welcoming and Inclusive Communities through Multi-level Governance” in *Horizons*. Policy Research Initiative, Government of Canada.

Toronto North LIP – History and Catchment

In the north region of Toronto, four LIPs were established in the fall of 2009 and underwent the process, as described above, through to March 2012. These LIPs were the Bathurst-Finch LIP, Don Valley LIP, Lawrence Heights LIP and North York East LIP. Taken together, these former LIPs supported settlement and immigration planning in 12 of Toronto’s neighbourhoods.

In 2012, the support for LIPs in Toronto expanded into neighbourhoods formerly un-served by LIPs. This necessitated the integration of formerly distinct LIPs under regional umbrellas. By combining the four above-described neighbourhood LIPs, Toronto North LIP was created. In addition to the former catchments served by LIPs, the expansion of LIPs in Toronto saw the addition of 25 new City of Toronto neighbourhoods. The below map illustrates both former and new catchment areas developed through LIP’s expansion.



This amalgamation unfolded through 3 steps:

- 1) Plenary meeting of all former neighbourhood LIP members. Bringing all former LIP members together to jointly address the impact of these changes was a critical step as it reinforced the commitment to build on LIP accomplishments to-date and gauged affinity for a new, regional scope of work.
- 2) Outreach to Toronto North service providers in the new, formerly un-served catchment areas and consultations to learn about the particular challenges and resources available in these communities.
- 3) Creation of a Leadership Committee to steward the development and implementation of the Toronto North Settlement and Employment Strategy and Action Plan.

For more information on the work of the Toronto North LIP, visit: www.torontonorthlip.ca.

Toronto North Newcomer Demographic and Needs Profile

This profile draws on census and other demographic data sets as well as community consultations conducted between 2010-2012 in Toronto North communities. These consultations were designed to determine the needs of newcomers in these neighbourhoods.

More complete community demographic profiles that include newcomer and service provider consultations as well as community assets (i.e. facilities, parks, services, and other catchment-specific data) and other statistical data such as employment and industry figures in these communities is made available on the www.torontonorthlip.ca website.

This Settlement and Employment Strategy identifies Strategic Directions based on the needs of newcomer communities, and the following Toronto North Demographic and Needs Profile provides the foundation necessary to set the strategic directions that are identified later in this document.

General overview of Toronto North

Area Boundaries

Toronto North is an area in the north-central region of Toronto that is bound by Steeles Avenue to the north, Victoria Park Avenue to the east, the CN Railway, Don River and St. Clair Avenue to the south and the CN Railway, Allen Road and Dufferin Road to the West.



Census demographics

Key population statistics

Toronto North covers an area of 145 square kilometers in Toronto's central north region. The population in 2006 was 631,027 and the population growth rate between 2001 and 2006 was 3.5% overall with a neighbourhood-level population change ranging from 60% growth to 11% decline. In 2011, this neighbourhood-level population change ranged from 50.4% growth to 10.2% decline.

Population by Immigrant Status

Pop by Place of Birth	Individuals in Toronto North	% of Total Pop - Toronto North	% of Total Pop – City of Toronto
Immigrants	320, 515	52.5	45.7
Non-Immigrants	289, 995	47.5	52.7

In 2006, 53% of Toronto North's population were immigrants to Canada, almost 7% above the city average. On a neighbourhood scale, immigrant population ranges from 71.3% to 18.4% of the total population.

Also in 2006, 26% of all immigrants living in Toronto North had arrived to Canada between 2001 and 2006 compared to the city average of recent immigrants at just 19%. In 2006 alone, 17,565 newcomers arrived in the area directly from abroad suggesting a pattern of accelerating immigration to the area.

Data sources

The majority of this demographic profile uses census data from 2006 to develop a portrait of the geographic communities residing in Toronto North. It is important to note, in interpreting this information, the limitation of this dataset that is outdated by over six years. The most recent census data collected in 2011 has not been fully released with major gaps in available information on newcomers, income, education and other socio-economic indicators at the time of publication of this profile. Toronto North LIP will continue to update this profile as new information is made available.

Another key limitation is the definition of 'immigrants' in census tracking where immigrants are foreign-born nationals who are (at the time of the census) or were formerly landed immigrants or permanent residents. This category, therefore, excludes refugee claimants, temporary foreign workers, foreign VISA students and, of course, undocumented individuals. In Toronto North's approach to planning for newcomer supports, the definition of 'newcomer' is broad, including anyone foreign-born who intends to reside in Canada permanently or semi-permanently and their immediate family. Therefore, there is an unknown degree of discrepancy between the population represented in the profile and the population that is the core focus of LIPs.

Therefore, to better round out the portrait of newcomers living in Toronto North, LIP has sought to cross-reference data sets collected through intake and enrollment at large sector-based institutions such as language centres, food banks and schools and LIP will continuously update the profile with such supplemental data and information as it becomes available. In addition, through LIP's own research, particular emphasis will be placed on accounting for the experiences of the newcomer populations not reflected in statistical data sets.

Despite the limitations presented above, this data profile can be used as a primer on settlement patterns in Toronto North communities.

Toronto North Sub Regions Lawrence Heights – Neptune – Lotherton Pathways

The communities of Lawrence Heights, Neptune and Lotherton Pathways are situated in the northwest area of Toronto. Taken together, these communities comprise 9.5 square kilometres in area. Many residents of this catchment struggle with poor access to services, isolation, and lower socio-economic indicators when compared to the City of Toronto. In 2005, the catchment was identified as a priority neighbourhood through the City of Toronto's *Strong Neighbourhoods Taskforce*. Approximately 32% of the catchment's population have a household income of \$30,000 or less compared to the City of Toronto's 10%



Lawrence Heights has a large immigrant population with over 51% residents being immigrants. More than 16% of those immigrants arrived in Canada between 2001 and 2006. Of those recent immigrants, the top regions of origin are Asia and the Middle East (52%); Europe (20%); South America (8%) and Africa (8%).

Almost 5% of those living in the broader Lawrence Heights catchment do not speak English and 47% of the population have a mother tongue other than English or French. The top primary languages in the catchment are: Italian 12%; Filipino/Tagalog 6%; Spanish 4%; Portuguese 3%; Yiddish 2%; and Russian 2%.

The newcomer population in Lawrence Heights is young. Almost 24% of newcomers are aged 15-24, and 45% are aged 25-44 compared to the rest of Toronto's 13% and 32% respectively. Top regions of origin for newcomers in Lawrence Heights are: Southeast Asia (35%); Eastern Europe (17%); West Central Asia and Middle East (10%); Africa (8%) and South America (8%).

Participants in the consultation described a wide range of challenges that newcomers face. Upon arriving in Canada, it can be difficult for newcomers to obtain information specific to their needs. While there is a lot of information about services, programs and 'what you need to do', it tends to be too general, and rarely available in languages other than English. While some specific programs were noted as being very useful, some respondents felt that there is still a lack of readily available and easily accessible basic information that is commonly required by many newcomers. Examples of this include information explaining Canadian laws; how to pay bills; how to read and interpret a contract; how to 'decode' forms. The need for better access to childcare while seeking information, orientation or programming of any kind was emphasized throughout the consultations.

Since language learning is so vital to the settlement process, many newcomers expressed frustration when they were unable to access courses due to waitlists, lack of childcare or other system-related barriers. Many participants described the need for English training to be available at higher levels. Focusing language training on things like pronunciation and occupation-specific training, was seen to be important and also missing from local service offerings. Outside the classroom, continuing to learn and practice English is also challenging because some newcomers do not socialize outside their ethno-cultural networks. Respondents cited reservation, shyness and embarrassment as real barriers to

practicing their English in the 'real world'. Alternative forms of English language training are welcome in the community where examples might include family ESL, language or cultural exchanges, or conversation circles.

A variety of literacy training programs currently exist in the community. Further support for these programs (whether outreach, translation, childcare, etc.), particularly where they help to offer English language learning opportunities, could go far to combat isolation, another key barrier to settlement success.

There was overwhelming consensus among all participants that immigration was an emotional and stressful process, regardless of the circumstances that brought newcomers to Canada. Some described how low-confidence and self-esteem due to difficulty settling and adapting to life in Canada can lead to anxiety and depression. Described as a vicious cycle, the negative impact on mental well-being creates further barriers to employment and other settlement outcomes.

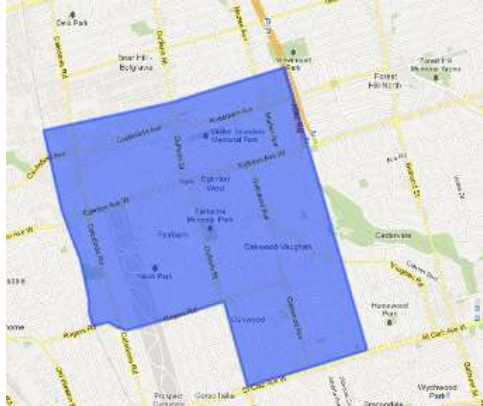
In some cultures, mental health is not recognized as a health issue, and is stigmatized. The need for culturally appropriate mental health initiatives and treatments was most mentioned by frontline workers, who interact with clients on a regular basis. Respondents also underlined the importance of cultural accommodation and appropriateness. They expressed the need for doctors and other health practitioners to be more sensitive about religious and/or cultural practice.

Looking for a job is never easy. Some respondents admitted they didn't understand proper job-search procedures such as interview etiquette, resume writing, networking, or where to find postings. At the same time, service providers struggle to clarify their role to newcomers. A common misunderstanding occurs when newcomers believe that non-profit employment agencies can offer them a job. Feelings of betrayal and demoralization can persist when the programs offered by employment services do not result in jobs. There was discussion about the need for more pre-employment and job-readiness services tailored to fit the needs of newcomers.

There is a demand in the community for information and guidance on starting small businesses. Respondents are looking for information about grants, loans and other sources of financial support, rules and regulations, permits, and microcredit. In the area of credential assessment, even if a newcomer successfully undergoes a credential evaluation, it does not guarantee that a potential employer will recognize those credentials. Better awareness and, possibly, legislation and regulation is needed to help employers identify newcomer skills.

Respondents also felt that more outreach was needed to help parents better understand the school system and how it works, what is 'normal' and how to become involved. Many respondents, including youth themselves, felt that youth in the community need stronger role models from their own ethno-cultural communities to assist with programming and to act as volunteers in support of local youth.

Oakwood/ Vaughan – Fairbank - Marlee Village



The central-west area of Toronto known as Oakwood/Vaughan, Fairbank and Marlee Village has a total population of 45,920. All three of these are among the top five Toronto North neighbourhoods with low levels of post-secondary education among the adult population. The Marlee Village and Oakwood/Vaughan neighbourhoods are among the top ten neighbourhoods in Toronto North with household incomes less than \$30,000.

While, overall, this community has a mixture of socio-economic indicators which do not place it in the bracket of high-risk or 'priority', the deteriorating socio-economic indicators identified above suggest that there are pockets of high need in this community.

The overall immigrant population, as of 2006, was 58%. While it is not a community that receives high numbers of recent immigrants, there are neighbourhoods such as Marlee Village where it is understood, through LIP consultations with frontline staff, community workers and residents, that patterns of settlement among refugee claimants, temporary foreign workers and possibly even undocumented foreign nationals would bring the numbers of newcomers up.

Upon consultation with frontline staff and community workers in 2012, specific challenges affecting the general population in these communities included a lack of medical and health supports such as free dental services for low and low-mid income individuals. Additionally, assistance for youth that would help support them to stay in school and obtain high school diplomas was also raised. The drop-out rate among youth in these communities was a source of concern as was the lack of assistance to support access to post-secondary education (including financial and social support). For the newcomer population in the Oakwood/Vaughan – Fairbank – Marlee Village neighbourhoods, language training was seen as a primary need among newcomer professionals and highly educated foreign nationals. Related to this, respondents also noted the need to better support recognition of foreign education, training and employment credentials.

Bathurst Corridor – Bathurst Manor



The total population of the Bathurst Corridor – Bathurst Manor neighbourhoods of Toronto's north-west was 20,680 in 2006. The population of newcomers is generally in-step with the City of Toronto's average, however Bathurst Manor, in particular, has a pronounced population of recent newcomers at 26% when compared to the City of Toronto's 19%. According to information collected through grade school enrollment by the Toronto District School Board, elementary schools report much higher rates of English Language Learners among their young students when compared to the average for the TDSB as a whole.

The top regions of origin for recent immigrants are Europe and South-east Asia. While income levels are, on average, similar to those patterns seen across Toronto, when looking at the spread of incomes, particularly in

Clanton Park, there is a stark contrast between the incomes of the highest earners and lowest earners. Clanton Park's Gini Coefficient is in the top 25th percentile of all of Toronto's neighbourhoods which suggests that income inequality is particularly high in this neighbourhood.

Bathurst Manor has higher rates of dependency (more than 50% higher than Toronto average) which is largely driven by the dependency of seniors on their relatives.

From consultations conducted by LIP in 2012, several areas were identified as priority issues for the communities in this catchment. Legal supports are in-demand, particularly in the areas of immigration and refugee issues, government assistance, and civil issues. Emotional and psychological supports to help people cope with a variety of hardships including separation anxiety, depression, isolation, stress of financial burden and adaptation to new environment were also cited.

Supports for those newcomers who are entering the labour market is a top priority. A particular emphasis should be placed on supporting them to gain accreditation as well as meaningful employment and help for those proficient in English to advance their occupation-specific language skills.

With the high population of seniors and elderly in this catchment come increased demands for basic living supports including primary health care, transportation, and language-specific programming, especially Russian, Polish, Yiddish. Financial assistance to pay for medication and to access mental health supports were also identified as particular needs of seniors.

Finally, it was identified through consultations that there are many live-in workers and caregivers in this neighbourhood many of whom are likely working on temporary VISAs and who, as a result, experience acute and particular needs when it comes to basic supports from health to education and training. More research is needed to better understand the needs of this group.

Bathurst-Finch (Westminster Branson)



Bathurst-Finch (also known by its civic name Westminster-Branson) is one of Toronto's northernmost neighbourhoods. In 2005, the neighbourhood was identified as a priority neighbourhood through the City of Toronto's *Strong Neighbourhoods Taskforce* where one of the primary indicators attributing to this status is the community's poor access to services and isolation. In addition, the neighbourhood experiences lower socio-economic indicators when compared to the larger City of Toronto where Bathurst-Finch residents had an average after-tax household income of \$49,440 in 2005 (compared to the rest of the City at \$63,870). The incidence of low income after-tax in Bathurst-Finch is 24.9%, again compared to Toronto at 19.4%.

According to the 2006 Canada Census, Bathurst-Finch has a very large immigrant population at over 70%. More than 33% of those immigrants arrived in Canada between 2001 and 2006 which reveals that the population is rapidly growing and diversifying. While the majority of residents (31%) identify themselves as being of Jewish ethnic origin and 23% of Russian origin, there are many other enclaves

from across the globe increasingly arriving and settling in this neighbourhood. Other groups, according to their ethnic origin, are: Filipino (9%), Ukrainian (8%), and Polish (6%). The top native languages spoken in the community besides English are Russian (32%), Tagalog (6%), Korean (4%), Hebrew (3%), and Persian (2%).

Community consultations in Bathurst-Finch yielded much insight into the newcomer experience there. In the area of information and referrals, there is too much information to navigate and much of it is not relevant to the Bathurst-Finch neighbourhood. Many newcomers turn instead to their social networks to learn about rights, responsibilities, systems, benefits and services. Yet, social networks are also a source of frustration as more established immigrants admit they sometimes feel uncomfortable providing advice or even worried that they will provide the wrong information or advice. Many find it difficult to distinguish between not-for-profit settlement and employment services and for-profit consultants, leading to further confusion, misinformation, and in some severe cases, exploitation. Despite English language skills, newcomers feel more comfortable accessing information and supports in their own language.

For Live-in-Caregivers, reliance on employers for orientation and information is strong, and social networks are weak at the outset. Live-in Caregivers rely on their employers for housing which destabilizes housing for this population. Furthermore, many caregivers must vacate their employer's home on the weekend and rent apartments with other caregivers that they only occupy for 2 days a week in crowded conditions. Some caregivers that stay with employers on weekends often work on their day off, by default of being present in the household.

The requirement of credit, reference and employment checks by landlords can make it impossible for a newcomer, with few local connections, to secure housing. The majority of newcomers in Bathurst- Finch reported having resolved this by relying on friends and family in the neighbourhood to underwrite leases. This, however, leads to a dependency on social networks which can lead to unstable housing when social networks break down. The cost of housing in Bathurst- Finch is considered to be somewhat expensive compared to other neighbourhoods of the GTA. Overcrowding of apartments is not uncommon. At the same time, the stock of subsidized housing is low and difficult to access due to long waitlists.

Many newcomers in Bathurst-Finch are looking for opportunities to learn or improve their English skills, but cite a low level of available programs and services. Supports to access these services, such as childcare and TTC tokens, are also not available in the area. Newcomers with high levels of education fear they are not getting adequate language training to be competitive in their chosen fields. When people do access language training, they are sometimes disappointed with the caliber and quality. Alternative language training services such as conversation circles are growing in popularity. English language training, while important, is too often disrupted by the need to work.

There is a strong belief among newcomers that discrimination exists in hiring practices against people with accents or whose English language training is not advanced. Lack of Canadian work experience and references was frequently cited as the biggest barrier to employment. There is a strong appetite for more networking opportunities, especially with Canadian-born counterparts. Many also feel that they are not well prepared for the job search and do attempt to seek help with resumes, interview preparation and job market research. However, there is room for improvement in employment services and supports, with a need for a stronger link between preparing newcomers for the Canadian workplace

and matching them with employment opportunities. Getting credentials recognized is expensive and bogged down in red tape. Upgrading of credentials at local institutions is a strategy used by several to receive relevant education and training. Nevertheless, schooling comes at a high cost and some newcomers are not eligible for OSAP. Self-employment was often cited as a viable a fall-back plan for those newcomers who are unsuccessful in attaching to the workforce.

Many newcomers are burdened, in their finances, health, and social-integration, by the 3-month wait period before being eligible for OHIP. There is frustration with the long time that it takes to find a family doctor. Many doctors in the neighbourhood are not taking new patients and waitlists are long. Russian-speaking doctors are also in demand and very few are available to residents. For immigrant seniors, healthcare needs are a priority (more than language, employment, etc...).

Parents believe that recreational programs that do exist for youth are expensive and have short runs as the most popular programs are long-running programs. When it comes to support with school work, the academic expectations of several newcomer parents are high. High expectations seem to be cultural with some groups overemphasizing academic achievement when compared to other groups. Parents air frustration around cultural and generational gaps they experience with their children as well as with the school system.

Newtonbrook - Willowdale

Newtonbrook (East and West) and Willowdale (East) lie in the north-centre of Toronto with a total population of 90,405 in 2005. Immigrants comprise 63% of the population and the primary regions of origin of immigrants are Eastern Asia and Western Asia / Middle East.



Within this catchment, Willowdale East in particular, is the 5th- largest immigrant receiving population in Toronto; that is, the neighbourhood boasts the 5th-highest ratio of recent immigrants to other residents. According to enrollment data from the Toronto District School Board, students born outside Canada make up 42% of elementary school enrollments in this catchment. This is more than two times more than the school board's average of 20%.

This neighbourhood also has a high instance of low income with 53% of households earning \$50,000 or less (after-tax), yet it also boasts the highest rates of university-level (diploma or degree) education in Toronto. A large portion of those degrees in question are foreign-earned where Willowdale East factors 13th among Toronto North neighbourhoods for foreign-earned degrees. The neighbourhood also has the 3rd highest rate of youth unemployment among all Toronto North neighbourhoods at 22%.

Through community consultations in 2012, it was learned that newcomers in this community struggle with having their foreign-earned credentials assessed. Stemming from this, many newcomers are seeking upgrading, skills training and accreditation as well as language training.

Health is also an area of concern, with medical and health care supports being in high demand and low supply, including dental. It was noted that there is a lack of community health centers in the area. Newcomers seeking support through spousal abuse and elder abuse were noted to be increasing in consultation. Further research would be required to understand the prevalence and causes of any such abuse.

The instance of university-level VISA students living alone in and around this community was also noted and is a growing newcomer experience in this neighbourhood.

North York East



North York East has a population of just under 80,000. The majority of residents (70%) that live in this area are immigrants to Canada where recent immigrants (those who arrived between 2001 and 2006) comprised 20% of this population. Chinese and Farsi are the predominant first languages spoken in North York East, however, pockets of Arabic, Romanian, Tagalog and Urdu-speaking communities also exist throughout the area. Education is highest in pockets where recent immigrants live. Unemployment is also highest in these places. A more detailed breakdown of demographics is summarized below.

The top countries of origin for immigrants living in North York East are China & Hong Kong, Iran, India and the Philippines. Forty-four percent of all recent immigrants to the area were born in China. A further 26% of newcomers living in the area were born in Iran, India or the Philippines.

43% of North York East's 24-65yr old population hold a university degree or higher. This compares to a city average of just 28%. Thirteen percent of the area's working-age population hold graduate or post-graduate degrees, which is 5% above the city average. Fifty-seven percent of post-secondary degrees and diplomas were earned abroad.

Forty five percent (45%) of households in North York East live off an after-tax annual family income of \$50,000 or less. Over 20% of all households in the North York East LIP live off an after-tax income of \$30,000 or less.

In consultations with newcomers, many challenges were raised as particular concerns. Newcomers felt that the child care system is confusing as is the costing structure and eligibility criteria, particularly for new immigrants. They cited that it was difficult to develop inter-cultural social networks due to language or cultural barriers. Newcomers reported that becoming familiar and adept at navigating the educational system was a challenge, especially in the absence of information or orientation material specifically designed for newcomers. Many newcomer parents reported that extra-curricular activities were often expensive or difficult to find. For youth, asking staff or teachers for information or advice was difficult and that available information did not go far enough to meet their needs. Several youth

felt that there was not enough being done within the school system to encourage inclusion of newcomer youth.

In seeking employment, many newcomers were asked for Canadian experience while language barriers, a lack of networking opportunities and information gaps about sector-specific employment were identified as major challenges. Many felt that credential assessment was a lengthy and expensive process, and that volunteer experience did not help them to find employment in the city. There was a desire among many newcomers for more profession-related information and job-search assistance.

In the area of health, newcomers felt that spaces in gardening and cooking programs were limited and there was an overwhelming reporting of declining physical and mental health within the first three years of settlement. In accessing the health system, some cited difficulty in understanding the health system while others identified language and communication barriers, fees for non-OHIP services, and a lack of awareness of services available in the area and that health services lacked cultural sensitivity. A lack of adequate and affordable housing as well as available, straight-forward and clear-language information about housing, tenant rights and social housing were a key barrier.

In the area of language learning, a need for a greater range of class types that suit different language learning needs was identified. English courses with a professional/work focus, conversation circles focusing on listening & speaking, and peer language learning opportunities were identified to be in-demand. For available classes, more supports were needed to provide access including child minding, transportation supports and evening/ weekend options.

The overall provision of information on services and supports was also seen by newcomers to be inaccurate at times, complex, overwhelming and confusing. There is a demand and desire for simplified information on programs and services where some sub-populations, such as the LGBTQ community, also reported an absence of material addressing their needs and concerns.

Don Valley: Thorncliffe Park - Flemingdon Park – Parkwoods/Donalda



The Don Valley catchment is a very large area of 27 square kilometres home to 115,000 people and composed of a wide range of communities, from geographic to ethno-specific among others. Taken as a whole, much of the catchment’s demographics resemble those of Toronto as a whole, but zooming into specific sub-catchments reveal population trends that are critical to service planning and support.

Some key demographics, according to 2005 figures, include a population with 30% seniors in the northern portion of the catchment, and a large 30% youth population in the southern portion of the area.

Immigration into the LIP is generally high with 57% of the population born outside of Canada compared to the CMA average of 46%. Immigration rates range from 37% in the northern Parkwoods-Donalda area to 77% in

the southern Thorncliffe Park area. The top countries of immigration are Pakistan (11%), India (8%), China (8%), Philippines (7%). The Pakistani community nearly doubled in a five-year period and are most likely to be living in the southern Thorncliffe Park neighbourhood. Immigration from China is growing in the northern portion of the catchment, where Chinese immigrants account for 20% of the immigrant population. In-line with these trends, the top five non-English languages spoken in the home are: Urdu (6.1%), Persian (3.3%), Chinese (not specified – 3.0%), Tamil (2.3%), and Gujarati (2.3%).

Median household incomes in the LIP range from \$24,367 in Flemingdon Park to \$125,227 in Banbury-Don Mills. Households earning \$30,000 or less annually appear at a higher rate of 38% in the southern area of Thorncliffe Park, Flemingdon and Victoria Village.

With respect to education, almost half (48%) of the people over 25 with a university degree received that degree outside of Canada. This is significantly higher than Toronto-wide figures where about a third (33%) of people received degrees outside of Canada. The proportions of people receiving degrees outside of Canada is highest in Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park (where immigration is also highest), where 78% of degrees came from countries other than Canada.

In community consultations, the key themes of discussion were employment, access to services and language. In the area of employment, seniors reported that they felt discriminated against, especially when jobs require physical aptitude and they reported that they did not feel equipped to write resumes as this is something that was new to many respondents. Youth respondents reported challenges navigating on-line job searches and employment was a challenge. Additionally, youth expressed anxiety as a result of unemployment amongst their parents. Working age adults cited a long list of challenges with employment including lack of Canadian experience, limited information about evaluation of credentials and skills upgrading, discrimination, difficulty finding placements and volunteer opportunities, financial difficulty because of unemployment and difficulty adapting to a new culture.

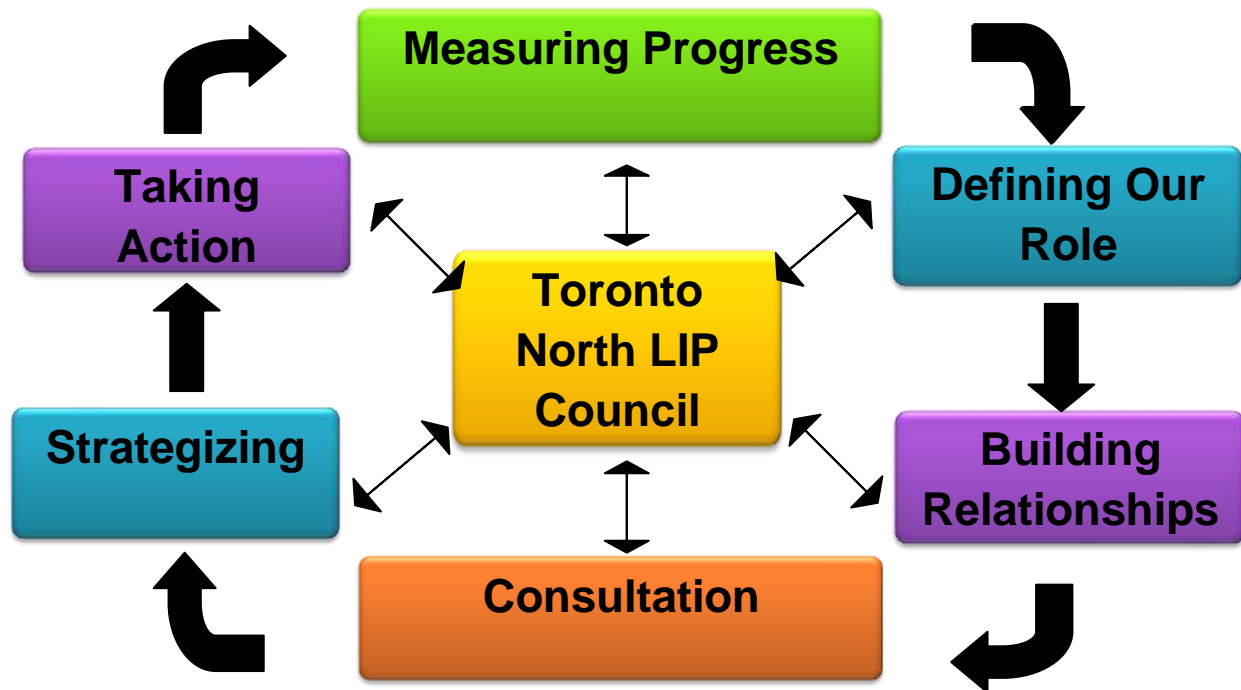
In discussing service access and supports, seniors cited a wide range of concerns including public transportation which is further complicated for those seniors who depend on their families, difficulty contacting government service offices, difficulty and frustration when using automated phone systems and difficulty obtaining a driver's license. For youth, a lack of knowledge and information about school culture and the banking system was cited as an area of concern and, at the same time, youth reported that they are hesitant to access services in settlement agencies. Working-age adults cited a wide range of barriers in general access to services and mainstream systems including lack of affordable child care, recreational activities for adults and kids, dental services (especially for seniors and children), and access to translation and interpretation services. The travel distance to key community services, including settlement services in the community, were also cited as were common challenges of settlement including cultural adjustment and adaptation, adjustment to weather and the Canadian legal system.

In the area of language services, seniors felt that they were too old to learn English and lacked English language skills which increases isolation and decreases confidence in their ability to secure work. Youth expressed that they do not feel confident in their English language skills.

Strategy Development

Collaborative Planning

The LIP planning and implementation process exists on a continuum where Council supports ongoing relationship building, consultation and research, strategy refinement and action. The figure below represents this continuum highlighting the iterative and ongoing process of planning, implementation, inquiry and synthesis of results.



The above process is only effective when followed in consultation and collaboration with multiple players and stakeholders throughout. Among these are residents, agencies, businesses and institutions. LIP acknowledges that among these stakeholders are a wide range of needs, perspectives and barriers that are sometimes real and sometimes perceived, sometimes named or articulated and other times difficult to identify. Throughout this process, staff and partners have checked assumptions and sought multiple perspectives and methods of informing the planning and action process.

The Employment and Settlement Strategy laid out in this document is accompanied by a 3-year Action Plan adopted by LIP Council. The Toronto North Steering Committee supports the ongoing development of this process and stewards the implementation of these plans over a three-year cycle.

Participants in Toronto North represent a wide range of stakeholders from a variety of sectors that operate in the community to residents who live in Toronto North communities. Sectors represented at the LIP table include housing, health, employment services, settlement, seniors services, public health, education, community services, food banks, recreation, language, women's services, youth services and grassroots groups and the funders of some of these programs and services.

This broad spectrum of stakeholders reinforces the collaborative nature of this process and underpins one of the core values of a strong planning process: be inclusive.

LIP Collaboration also takes place across a landscape of LIPs in Toronto where Toronto North is one of four regional quadrants. A fifth, city-wide LIP Council supports municipal involvement from various departments in the City of Toronto as well as that of broad-based third-party stakeholders and is accountable to Toronto's City Council.

Core Values

In embarking on the development of a strategy for the Toronto North quadrant, a set of values guide the process and help Council focus on key components of a sound strategizing process:

- Focus on communities. Toronto North is a collection of communities and, as a local planning process, the strategy and action plan should seek to fortify communities and build on resilience.
- Consider vulnerability. Newcomers, like all people, move in and out of adversity and, as a result, in and out of phases of vulnerability. The strategy should be aware of this constant shifting and the need to constantly assess and re-assess vulnerability.
- Continue research and consultation. Maintaining ongoing connections that allow for the gathering of empirical evidence of challenges and opportunities will keep the process relevant and responsive.
- Balance the focus. Strike a balance between building newcomer capacity and building the capacity of the receiving community, including that of policy and government to respond effectively to local challenges.
- Reinforce the work of others. Build connections among other networks working towards social inclusion in ways that generate action and participation at the local level.
- Be inclusive. No single individual, organization or sector can address challenges to effective settlement in isolation alone – build bridges with a variety of actors and engage those who form parts of the solution.

Vision

Members of Toronto North LIP come to the Council table to support the realization of a common vision:

a future where newcomers are 1) welcomed into their communities early after arrival; 2) provided with options for supports made available on an ongoing basis that are client-focused, accessible and culturally appropriate and the safeguard their economic integration, health and wellbeing and language training goals; and 3) invited to participate in, and contribute to, their Toronto North community.

To achieve this vision, the mission of the Toronto North LIP Council is to develop and implement a Settlement and Employment Strategy and Action Plan that brings a wide range of community stakeholders together to collaboratively identify key challenges and possible opportunities to address those challenges.

Priority Areas

To achieve this vision, the following four priority areas have been set out through which this work will be accomplished:

- Recent newcomers are welcomed, receive timely supports and have their contributions recognized;
- Newcomers have access to language training that adequately matches their learning goals and life circumstances;
- Newcomers are healthy, have appropriate and timely health supports made available to them, and access them;
- Newcomers are employed at levels commensurate with their skills and experience and have access to appropriate training

Recent newcomers are welcomed, receive timely supports and have their contributions recognized

From before they arrive in Canada, newcomers are steeped in a wide range of information coming from a variety of sources about what settlement will feel like in Canada. It is critical to engage newcomers early, effectively and often to help them realize their full potential as contributing Toronto North community members. It is not uncommon for newcomers to feel overwhelmed by the range and volume of services and offerings and to identify little with social services. It is also not uncommon for newcomers to feel that services do not meet their particular needs, and to turn to social networks and sometimes unreliable sources of information on what they should and could be doing to become settled in Canada. Any combination of these factors heighten isolation, increase vulnerability and set newcomers further behind on their settlement path.

Strategic Directions

1. Extend outreach to a broad range of newcomers to build awareness of service offerings in the community

Action Areas

- Support community events that encourage newcomer engagement and encourage the use of creative mediums in settlement services (e.g. digital/oral storytelling, art, social media) to enhance outreach
- Work with settlement providers to increase the volume of culturally sensitive material supporting newcomer understanding of Canadian systems, institutions, laws and culture
- Create comprehensive "Newcomer Welcome Packages" for Toronto North communities that are accessible on-line for those who have made Toronto North their destination and those who are already arrived

2. Support enhanced awareness in receiving communities of the social capital that newcomers possess

Action Areas

- Develop mechanism(s) to share information about newcomer wellbeing in Toronto North communities with a wide range of stakeholders and sectors

3. Enhance the accessibility of community-based services to newcomers

Action Areas

- Strengthen the availability of local interpretation services, explore the adaptation of emergency phone-based translation to the community setting, and provide more programs and system information in non-official languages to those sub-populations of newcomers with particularly low rates of English ability
- Enhance service access model by exploring *no wrong door* model for newcomers, point-of-arrival info access, and translation of services and programs into non-official languages

4. Focus on strengthening the settlement system through professional, inter-sectoral dialogue and exchange

Action Areas

- Support inter-agency training on cultural sensitivity for front-line workers/ volunteers
- Develop and/or support mechanisms that enhance resource exchange among a variety of sectors
- Facilitate partnerships that promote cultural competency in a wide range of institutions including schools, police, transportation, justice system, housing, etc. (i.e. share list of volunteer translators to increase awareness of language gap, etc.)
- Support inter-sectoral dialogue to identify and explore ways in which to address systemic barriers to newcomer adaptation and integration
- Explore systems of case management in settlement services that allow clients to be more fully tracked and followed

Newcomers have access to language training that adequately matches their learning goals and life circumstances

Newcomers to Toronto North have a variety of learning needs when it comes to ongoing language training. Many newcomers are working, some are in the school system, some are caring for young children, others are learning to read and write for the first time. Many are looking for work and trying to get an edge on the competition in the labour market and are looking for tools that they can access at different points in the day, from home, in the community and when they are out and about. Language has been identified as the single most important skill that newcomers can acquire to enhance their settlement outcomes and is a critical marker of success along the adaptation path. A coordinated and resourceful approach is needed to help newcomers meet and exceed their language learning goals.

Strategic Directions

1. Enhance the accessibility and variety of community-based language services

Action Areas

- Examine ways in which to expand current language offerings to accommodate delivery at a range of times and in a range of locations to enhance accessibility (i.e. part-time, daytime, evening, weekend, etc.)
- Explore alternative formats for formal and informal language learning classes to suit the particular learning objectives of different populations (i.e. occupation specific language training, ethno-specific training for those with low literacy in their mother tongue, recreation and leisure combined with language for seniors, family-based learning, conversation circles, professional writing, etc.)
- Explore online conversation circles for LIP-area residents through social media
- Advocate for continued free/low cost language supports (i.e. childcare) and expansion of eligibility criteria for training and supports

2. Focus on strengthening the settlement language training system through professional, inter-sectoral dialogue and exchange

Action Areas

- Explore opportunities to partner with private sector and provide English training on-the-job
- Support the development of a regular forum in which language service providers can collaborate
- Build relationships with educational institutions, explore potential for collaboration and volunteerism (i.e. explore partnerships with TEFL teachers in training)
- Develop “quick referral” tools to increase non-language front-line staff ability to refer to local language services and vice-versa
- Liaise with TDSB to examine ways in which to fortify pathways to ESL for school-aged language learners

Newcomers are healthy, have appropriate and timely health supports made available to them, and access them

Physical, spiritual, and emotional health all contribute to an individual's fundamental wellbeing and are reinforced by social determinants of health. We know that newcomers come to Canada healthy and that, over time, immigrant health deteriorates due to what is known as the 'immigrant health effect'. Supporting immigrants to maintain their health requires interventions that examine not just the individual, but the broader social context that newcomers are settling in including societal openness to cultures, the existence of racism and discrimination, and the availability and accessibility of work, school, recreation, housing and other human services.

Strategic Directions

1. Focus on strengthening health services to newcomers through professional, inter-sectoral dialogue and exchange

Action Areas

- Develop partnerships between settlement service providers and the healthcare sector to build awareness about diverse ethno-cultural norms, expectations, beliefs and values surrounding physical and mental health and to build the capacity of settlement workers and service providers to provide mental health information and referrals
- Advocate for more accessible/affordable dental care and drugplans, particularly for young (families) and seniors
- Advocate for newcomer representation on health centre/hospital planning/advisory boards

2. Extend outreach to a broad range of newcomers to build awareness of service offerings in the community

Action Areas

- More effectively disseminate healthcare information, particularly to vulnerable and isolated sub-populations (i.e. seniors, Live-in-Caregivers, refugee applicants, etc.)
- Support the expansion of culturally appropriate info sessions providing information about recreation centre facilities & services to newcomers

3. Increase the number of health and/or health promotion services dedicated to supporting newcomers

Action Areas

- Explore the introduction and enhancement of recreation programs to a broader reach of facilities such as schools and malls, and advocate for recreation programs that reflects cultural diversity
- Work with multiple stakeholders to de-stigmatize mental illness
- Respond to the increasing vulnerability of newcomers to diminishing food security, particularly those in neighbourhoods identified as 'food deserts' through support for culturally appropriate food markets, community gardens and nutrition programs
- Support efforts to effectively consult with newcomers to identify and address health needs & gaps and identify local resources to increase newcomer capacity to run self-directed community engagement activities

4. Support enhanced awareness in receiving communities of the social capital that newcomers possess

Action Areas

- Build on events and programs that encourage diversity, intercultural exchange and inter-generational exchange
- Raise awareness in the general public about cultural and religious diet norms and restrictions

Newcomers are employed at levels commensurate with their skills and experience and have access to appropriate training

Newcomers need support to access good jobs and there are two sides to this equation – the employer and the job-seeker. Working both sides of the equation simultaneously is critical. Employers need to be engaged in their local communities while service providers need to be supported to enhance and tailor their service offerings to the needs of newcomers. In recognition of multiple players in Toronto seeking to support immigrant job-seekers and immigrant workers, the settlement strategy seeks to work engage those building resources, tools and effective practices to better assist newcomers entering or re-entering the labour force.

Strategic Directions

1. Support enhanced awareness in receiving communities of the social capital that newcomers possess

Action Areas

- Raise awareness about newcomer talent and benefits of hiring newcomers (business case) and explore promising practices to incentivize employers to hire segments of newcomers (e.g. youth)

2. Focus on strengthening employment services to newcomers through professional, inter-sectoral dialogue and exchange

Action Areas

- Explore the challenges faced by the private sector re: hiring and retaining immigrants and work to make employment services more responsive to these needs (i.e. "No Wrong Door" access model - develop more harmonized intake, assessment and referral mechanisms)
- Strengthen the partnership between settlement and employment service providers in order to address the needs of immigrants with little or no education, training or work experience
- Develop tools to consult with newcomers about employment service gaps (i.e. create employment training feedback survey to identify newcomer priorities)

3. Increase the number of supports and interventions dedicated to supporting newcomer entrance into the workforce

Action Areas

- Work to expand internship, mentorship, co-op and work placement opportunities for internationally-trained individuals (ITIs) as well as newcomer youth
- Expand opportunities for newcomers to learn about Canadian work culture and soft skills
- Bring in resources to support newcomers who want to establish or develop their own business
- Better connect newcomers to training and vocational classes and explore ways in which to connect newcomers to areas of high demand in the labour market (i.e. apprenticeships)

4. Enhance outreach to newcomers to build awareness of and capacity to enter the Canadian labour market

Action Areas

- Enhance dissemination of timely, specific and relevant information about employment process, norms, accreditation, training, labour market and other data directly to newcomers as early in the settlement and job search process as possible.

Action Plan Framework

The Toronto North Settlement and Employment Action Plan is a companion document to the Strategy that details the work that will be done to advance the strategic directions over three years. The Action Plan maps the work of the LIP Council against measurable and attainable outcomes. It is also intended to identify needed resources and timelines for the achievement of goals. The below template provides a sample page from the Action Plan.

Action Area	Proposed Activities	Expected Results	Resources Needed	Timeline	Outcome Measures
Focus on strengthening the settlement language training system through professional, inter-sectoral dialogue and exchange					
Explore opportunities to partner with private sector and provide English training on-the-job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research and conduct business scan of Toronto North and identify employer language requirements/needs - Build relationship with businesses willing to pilot - Create inventory of current ESL/LINC classes and conversation circles, to be distributed to human resources departments - Build a relationship with community college and explore potential for collaboration. - Partner with the private sector and teacher training colleges to carry out on-the-job language training. 	<p>Booklet/ brochure of all ESL/LINC classes and conversation circles in Toronto North, as a resource for newcomer community and private sector.</p> <p>Local businesses interest in program identified and documented.</p> <p>Conduct language classes on employer premises.</p> <p>Documentation of success of pilot and recommendations for further development</p>	<p>Feasibility of programs explored through research on businesses</p> <p>Environmental scan of ESL services</p> <p>Funding for printing and other business engagement materials</p> <p>Partnership with community college</p> <p>Partnership with businesses</p>	<p>First 6 months</p> <p>6 months (Year 1)</p> <p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 3</p>	<p>Year 3: At least one model of workplace-based language delivery is piloted based on positive feasibility study outcomes. Pilot is evaluated for impact and scalability. Particular focus should be placed on supporting small and medium-sized employers. Learning lesson report accompanies the pilot.</p>