



Toronto

Newcomer Strategy

2022-2026





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Introduction

As home to the most diverse population in Canada, the City of Toronto recognizes the importance of municipal leadership on newcomer issues. We pride ourselves on being a welcoming city. And we know that the wellbeing of newcomers adds to Toronto’s social, economic and cultural vitality.

While some newcomers are thriving, others are not. Many have been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. The new Toronto Newcomer Strategy will guide the City as we intensify our efforts to ensure that our programs and services are accessible to newcomers and help to improve their lives.

The City takes a broad, inclusive approach in defining newcomers to include immigrants and refugees who have recently arrived in Toronto, refugee claimants, temporary residents, and undocumented persons.

A “Capital” City

When “City” appears with a capital C, it refers to Toronto’s municipal government. When “city” appears with a small C, it refers to Toronto as a geographic area.





Vision

1

Newcomers living in Toronto have a sense of belonging, well-being, and connectedness. They feel safe, supported, welcome and engaged.

2

The City is a leader in providing newcomers equitable access to municipal programs and services.

Guiding Principles

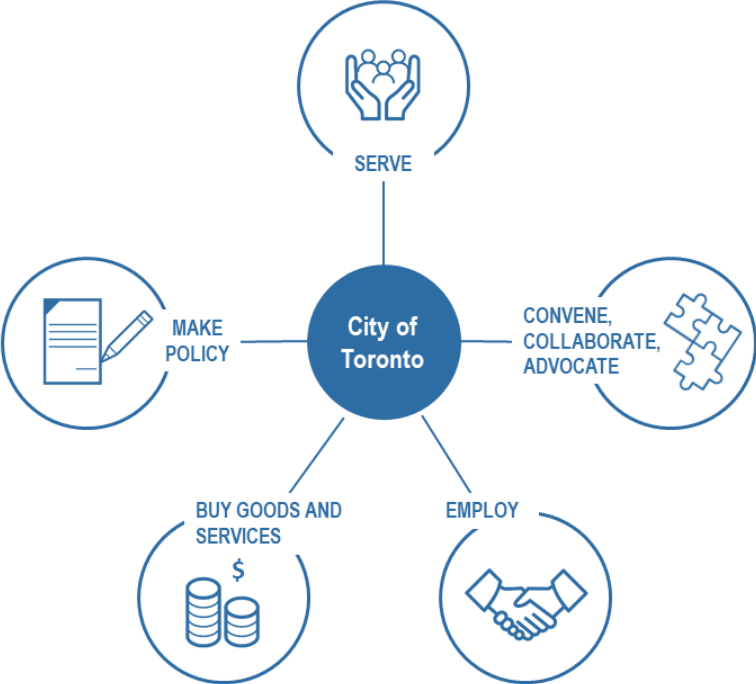
A City-Wide Approach

This is a City-wide strategy to be embraced and implemented by all parts of the City's government including elected officials, members of the public service and volunteers.

City Roles

As a signatory to the international Integrating Cities Charter, the City is committed to improving outcomes for newcomers through its role as a policy maker, service provider, employer, and buyer of goods and services.

The City is also committed to convene, collaborate and advocate locally, regionally, provincially, federally, and internationally on newcomer issues.





Diversity

City services must be sensitive to differing circumstances and lived experiences due to a newcomer's immigration status, official language ability, and intersecting identities related to race, gender, age, LGBTQ2, disability, faith, and mental health.

The City is also committed to convene, collaborate and advocate locally, regionally, provincially, federally, and internationally on newcomer issues.

Equitable Access

City programs and facilities, which are instrumental in newcomer integration, should be equitably available across Toronto in response to need.

Flexibility

The City will be flexible and forward looking to address both anticipated and unforeseen changes affecting newcomers.



Priorities for 2022-2026

1. Improve newcomer access to the City through employee training, outreach, and communication.
2. Rigorously implement the Access TO (Access without Fear) Policy.
3. Prepare and implement newcomer access plans for programs and services with a high impact on newcomer well-being.
4. Convene, collaborate and advocate on system-wide issues affecting newcomers.
5. Report on results.

Implementation Strategies

Priority 1: Training, Outreach and Communication

Improve newcomer access to the City through employee training, outreach, and communications.

Training is essential for City and City agency employees at all levels who have a significant or direct impact on newcomers. In particular, frontline staff need to be knowledgeable about and sensitive to newcomer experiences and the challenges they face. They need to know how to quickly access interpretation services for in-person, telephone and online communication. And they need to be well versed in the special considerations that apply when serving undocumented residents.

Many newcomers have difficulty finding what they need on the City's website and knowing what municipal services and supports are available for them. Better communications can improve this situation and reinforce the message of Toronto as a welcoming place to live.

Outreach to newcomers is also important, in collaboration with community partners. By giving newcomers a stronger voice, the City will better understand the barriers newcomers face and how it can help to remove those barriers.

Priority 2: Access TO

Rigorously implement the Access TO (Access without Fear) Policy.

Rigorous implementation of the Access TO Policy is necessary for the City to live up to its commitment to be a sanctuary city. This is a case of a good policy that has not received the resources and attention it needs for implementation. As a result, many undocumented residents do not access City services because they feel intimidated and fearful of being reported to immigration authorities for deportation.

Full implementation will involve training, a review of intake and registration forms, documentation management policies, a complaint mechanism, and ideally an ID that could be used to access any City service. It will also involve enhanced collaboration with organizations working with undocumented residents.

Priority 3: Newcomer Access Plans

Prepare and implement Newcomer Access Plans for programs and services with a high impact on newcomer well-being.

Newcomer Access Plans will be an important tool for achieving the vision, principles and priorities of the Toronto Newcomer Strategy. Newcomer Access Plans will focus on functions that:

- **Are essential to everyday life**, like income support, shelter, children's services, housing, public health, transportation, long-term care
- **Help newcomers to successfully integrate**, like the public library, recreation programs, community centres, and cultural programs
- **Provide pathways to economic success**, such as the City's employment, economic development, and procurement programs
- **Can make the difference between newcomers feeling safe and living in fear**, like Access TO, police, fire and paramedic services, emergency management, and by-law enforcement
- **Promote City-wide approaches on newcomer issues**, like the Toronto Newcomer Office

The creation of plans will be phased in during the first few years of the Toronto Newcomer Strategy.

Phase 1

- Shelter, Support and Housing Administration
- People and Equity
- Municipal Licensing and Standards
- Social Development, Finance & Administration
- Housing Secretariat
- Purchasing and Materials Management
- TO Emergency Services: Paramedics

Phase 2

- Children's Services
- Toronto Public Health
- Parks, Forestry and Recreation
- Economic Development and Culture
- Office of Emergency Management
- TO Emergency Services: Police, Fire

Phase 3

- Toronto Employment and Social Services
- Toronto Community Housing Corporation
- Toronto Transit Commission
- Toronto Public Library
- Court Services
- Senior Services and Long-Term Care

The plans will include an assessment of barriers to newcomer access, proposed priority actions as a policy maker, service provider, employer, and procurer, as relevant; priorities for convening, collaboration and advocacy; resource requirements; and an indication of how barriers will be removed and results will be measured. The City-wide or a program-specific equity lens tool will be used when developing policies and programs related to the plans. The Toronto Newcomer Office will provide guidelines and ongoing support.

Priority 4: Collaboration

Convene, collaborate and advocate on system-wide issues affecting newcomers.

Many of the barriers that newcomers face are systemic and beyond the City’s mandate and ability to resolve. To address these system-wide issues, collaborative engagement across governments, agencies and sectors is necessary. The City will continue engaging with its many stakeholders and partners: locally, regionally, provincially, federally, and internationally. This will include tables such as the Canada-Ontario-Toronto Immigration MOU Steering Committee, the Municipal Immigration Committee, the Newcomer Leadership Table and Local Immigration Partnership tables.



Priority 5: Report on results

Monitor implementation, measure progress, and report on results.

Reporting on results is essential for transparency and accountability and to signal progress that has been made. It is not easy, however, to identify and measure indicators that focus specifically on the City's success on newcomer issues. Many factors affecting newcomers are outside the City's control and involve other players. Federal immigration targets and surges of refugee claimants are just two examples. There is also limited local-level and internal City data that could be used to assess progress. Caution is required to ensure that the collection of data does not jeopardize the safety of persons without status.



With this in mind, success will be measured by the following indicators in addition to individual indicators identified in newcomer access plans under Priority 3.

Theme	Indicator
Access TO	Community organizations working with non-status residents report improvements in accessibility of City and City agency services for this client group.
Newcomer experiences	Surveys and focus groups with newcomers indicate the degree to which they feel welcome, have access to City services, and are able to interact with the City in their language.
Newcomer access plans	Selected City offices and agencies submit and report on the implementation of their newcomer access plans, including success in meeting indicators set out in their plans. The Toronto Newcomer Office will produce an annual report on progress.
Sharing results	Results of the Strategy’s implementation are posted on the City’s website during the course of the five-year period and upon its conclusion.



Role of the Toronto Newcomer Office

The Toronto Newcomer Office is an internal centre of expertise on newcomer and immigration issues. In that capacity, TNO will advise and support other City divisions and agencies in the achievement of all five priority areas, as well as having primary responsibility for coordinating the Toronto Newcomer Strategy. This will include a leading role in employee training related to the Strategy, implementing Access TO, advising on the City’s position related to immigration issues, providing guidance and support on the development and implementation of newcomer access plans, and reporting to Council and the public on progress.

In addition, Toronto Newcomer Office will work with the Newcomer Leadership Table, Toronto’s four quadrant Local Immigration Partnerships, and settlement sector partners on ways that their work can bolster successful implementation of the Strategy. This is in keeping with TNO’s role as a federally funded city-wide Local Immigration Partnership.



Conclusion

The City of has shown leadership and made positive strides on newcomer issues but many challenges and gaps still need to be addressed. The Toronto Newcomer Strategy provides a roadmap for achieving a greater impact for newcomer success.



Appendix: Consultation Highlights

From January to March, 2021, external consultants led a consultation with City officials, external stakeholders, and newcomers to generate ideas to inform the development of a renewed Toronto Newcomer Strategy. The consultation input was direct, constructive, and valuable.

In total, 116 individuals participated, primarily through video consultation sessions. They included 34 newcomers, 35 City employees, 4 City Councillors, and 43 external stakeholders and partners.

This section highlights observations made by consultation participants which should be considered in the development of newcomer access plans.

City as Policy Maker

In keeping with its motto “Diversity our Strength”, the City has adopted progressive policies and demonstrated a genuine commitment to benefit newcomer residents which in turn benefits the city as a whole. But implementation has been mixed and, in the case of Access TO, suffers from a lack of training, capacity and resources. The City is viewed as reacting well to crises (like the Syrian refugee crisis) and needs to do more long-term planning (such as for unforeseen fluctuations in arrivals).

City as Service Provider

Newcomers have experienced significant benefits but still face barriers in a range of City services, including social services, economic development, and recreation programs. The inconsistent provision of language interpretation and translation is a concern city wide, as are challenges associated with on-line service delivery in light of the digital divide.

The Toronto Public Library, one of the City's agencies, stands out as exemplary in its support of newcomers, including undocumented residents. The City's emergency shelters are notable for having helped many refugee claimants. The 311 information line and public health were cited as being instrumental in helping newcomers. Services designed specifically for newcomers – such as settlement kiosks in City facilities and the annual Newcomer Day event – are also well regarded.

Undocumented residents would have greater access to City services if there was a municipal identification card. In considering this direction, the City should learn from approaches used by the province of Ontario, other North American municipalities, and the Toronto Public Library.

City as Employer

As an employer, the City is viewed as having increased the diversity of its workforce, but there is still limited diversity in senior positions. Internships and fellowships for newcomers would be welcomed, especially those that provide the Canadian experience newcomers need to move forward in their careers. Ideally these positions should include pathways to permanent employment. It is also critically important to ensure positive working conditions for precarious, low-paid frontline workers in the City's long-term care system, many of whom are newcomers.

City as Procurer

The City spends billions of dollars on contracts to procure goods and services. On its face, the City's social procurement policy can help newcomer-led enterprises and professionals. There is little evidence, however, of resources ending up in their hands. The policy can also help to ensure that newcomer businesses can compete for City contracts and vendors provide community benefits through their hiring practices.

City as Convenor, Collaborator, Influencer

The City is well regarded for its role as a convenor and collaborator with community stakeholders and other government partners. The City's involvement with local community-based agencies, the settlement sector, and other orders of government led to the successful development of the Refugee Capacity Plan. However, the City should reach out more to newcomers so that they have a voice in policies, programs and evaluation. The City should also be more proactive in reaching out to employers, landlords and other orders of government in light of their impact on newcomer well-being. In particular, intergovernmental collaboration and advocacy are required to remove barriers in City services that stem from legislative requirements imposed by the provincial or federal government (for example, Ontario Works, and fee subsidy for child care), and to provide pathways for more workers to become permanent residents.

Data Collection

There is insufficient data to understand the take-up by newcomers of City services, their representation at all levels of the City's workforce and as recipients of government contracts, or the impact of City initiatives on newcomer short- and long-term outcomes. It is essential to ensure that data collection efforts do not compromise the trust and safety of undocumented persons.

Equity and Diversity

Many newcomers coming to Toronto are racialized. Black, Asian and other persons of colour, including racialized women, face special challenges as do persons who identify as LGBTQ2. Cultural sensitivity is important but training to counter racism, sexism, transphobia, etc. should be embedded throughout the strategy. The City's approach to newcomer issues must be part of its broader equity and diversity efforts, recognizing intersectionality and subgroups within the newcomer population.

The emergence of "equity lens" tools (which include a newcomer component) is a positive development, but the City should use such lenses more consistently when developing policies and programs.

The City should take steps to address Toronto's lack of geographic equity. In many neighbourhoods where newcomers reside, there is a lack of community centres, libraries and other services and amenities to enhance their integration. This affects newcomer well-being and decreases the likelihood that they will remain in Toronto.

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