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Made-in-Calgary

Municipal Immigration Strategy

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Presented by:



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Introduction

The Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary (ISCC) is a unique community infrastructure consisting of representatives from Calgary’s immigrant-serving agencies, government, funders, public institutions and ethno-cultural communities. This diverse body works to make Calgary stronger by identifying, prioritizing and addressing issues impacting the settlement and integration of newcomers in Calgary.

ISCC Members

Funding Bodies/ Government

Alberta Employment and Immigration
Calgary Learns
Citizenship & Immigration Canada
The City of Calgary, FCSS
United Way of Calgary and Area

Public Sector Organizations

Calgary Board of Education
Calgary Catholic School District
Calgary Health Region

Multicultural/Ethno-Cultural Groups

Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary
Calgary Multicultural Centre

Immigrant Serving Agencies

Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth
Calgary Catholic Immigration Society
Calgary Immigrant Educational Society
Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association
Centre d’accueil pour les nouveaux arrivants francophones (CANAF)
Centre for Newcomers
Immigrant Services Calgary
Jewish Family Service Calgary

ISCC believes Calgary needs a municipal immigration policy and strategy aimed at attraction, retention and integration of newcomers. While immigration is typically seen as a provincial and federal mandate, integration and social cohesion is a shared mandate by all levels of government. A policy and strategy led and implemented by The City of Calgary will move the city toward being a welcoming community for all. It will also ensure that Calgary gains the full social, cultural and economic benefits provided by a diverse society. While Calgary on the whole has not yet been negatively impacted by the lack of a local strategy addressing immigration, we must act quickly to pro-actively set the foundation for a prosperous future.

Context

Calgary's Immigrant Profiles

Since 2004, the number of Permanent Residents coming to Calgary increased from 9, 448 to 13,034 in 2008ⁱ. This number does not account for the large number of secondary migrants Calgary receives from other provinces, which is more difficult to track. Approximately 54% of the total Permanent Residents who are destined to Alberta settle in Calgary. Data from 2005 shows that approximately 60% of Permanent Residents to Calgary apply under the economic classⁱⁱ. In 2006, it is estimated that there were 32,600 newcomers under the age of 25 in Calgary, and this number is expected to increase to 35,850 by 2011ⁱⁱⁱ. Furthermore, 44.8% of newcomers to Calgary held at least a Bachelor's degree in 2005^{iv}. The top four source countries are China, India, Philippines and Pakistan^v. From 2005 to 2007, Calgary experienced a huge influx of secondary, or 'inland', migrants due to Calgary's low unemployment rate and the higher wages relative to other parts of Canada. Since 2006, Calgary has also seen a large influx in the number of Temporary Foreign Workers who have been hired to fill labour shortages.

While the economic downturn has slowed the demand for labour, it is only a matter of time before the economy rebounds. Projections just prior to the downturn showed that Canada would be completely reliant on immigration for net labour force growth by 2011, and for population growth by 2030^{vi}. A municipal immigration strategy for Calgary does not currently exist to support the existing newcomers or to prepare our city for these projections.

Municipal Strategies

However, city-wide strategies to address integration are not unheard of in Calgary. Broad initiatives have been attempted in the last 10 years, such as Diversity Calgary and Innovation in Integration: Toward a Practical Approach to Integration. Diversity Calgary made significant strides towards making Calgary a welcoming community but did not have sustained resources and the institutional leadership necessary to facilitate the integration of newcomers in Calgary. Despite its efforts and intentions, community

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ownership and financial resources were not accorded to implement the recommendations that resulted from Innovation in Integration.

Outside of Calgary, various municipalities in Canada are strategizing to attract and retain newcomers into their local communities. Cities like Toronto, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Regina, Halifax, Saskatoon, amongst others, have managed to develop a municipal immigration strategy as part of their effort to create a welcoming community for newcomers. Calgary, as the fourth-largest recipient of newcomers in Canada, must heed their efforts and similarly position itself as a welcoming and supportive place to live, work, and learn.

Rationale

A municipal immigration policy and strategy would align with The City of Calgary Council Priorities, particularly in the areas of community well-being and corporate sustainability. A policy and strategy would foster community well-being and ensure a sustainable city by encouraging and promoting the diverse contributions newcomers have to offer so that Calgary as a whole benefits and prospers. It would also add-value to The City’s corporate diversity strategies such as the Immigrant Employment Partnership Project with the Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary and signing on to Canadian Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination. While City of Calgary initiatives such as ImagineCalgary and the Calgary Economic Development Strategy capture some of the issues around immigration and offer basic solutions, a targeted initiative is necessary to fully address the complex nature of immigration and the specific needs of newcomers. The Calgary Economic Development Strategy indeed calls for the implementation of a settlement strategy to enable new individuals and families to settle and integrate in Calgary easily^{vii}. To date, such a strategy has not been developed.

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The Alberta Government, through its provincial immigration strategy, has called upon municipalities to implement local commitment to immigration. A made-in-Calgary municipal immigration policy and strategy would surely be supported by the Alberta Government and would lead to vertical alignment of policies. As stated in a study comparing municipal responsiveness to immigration, ‘local agency matters to immigrant settlement and “multicultural” policy’^{viii}.

Newcomers have always played a vital role in Canada's economy and overall development. However, a range of factors, including anticipated population decline in Canada and the need for skilled and well-educated workers, mean that newcomers will become increasingly critical to the labour market and to the overall development of the social, cultural and economic fabric of the city. Indeed, by 2011, it is predicted that Canada will be dependent on immigration for net labour force growth^{ix}. By 2016 Alberta could have a shortage of 109,000 workers^x. Yet, a range of barriers prohibit or limit their ability to find meaningful employment. The Calgary Foundation's 2008 Vital Signs reported that 'almost 50% of

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employed immigrants who come to Alberta with postsecondary credentials are not utilizing their skills and experience in their jobs^{xi}. Despite that immigrants typically have higher education than their Canadian-born counterparts, recent immigrants' average income is 63.2% that of non-immigrant average income. In fact, it is estimated that \$3.5 billion in earnings is foregone by skilled newcomers due to non-recognition of prior learning and experience^{xii}. It is also suggested that between 34,000 and 83,000 post-secondary degree holders could be added to Canada if key barriers to learning recognition faced by newcomers were addressed. Another study estimates that Canadian newcomers' earnings are \$11 billion under what they would be if their skills were fully utilized^{xiii}. According to 2003 Statistics Canada data, while 80% of prime working-age newcomers found employment in their first two years in Canada, only 42% of those obtained a job in their intended occupation^{xiv}. In fact, 70% of newcomers looking for work reported experiencing barriers, with language, transferability of foreign qualifications, and lack of contacts being reported most frequently^{xv}.

Poor labour market performance is also related to a number of integration issues - qualification recognition, social isolation and low levels of community participation, to name a few. Social and community capital needs to be built in order for each immigrant to fully participate in Canadian society. Economic, social, emotional, psychological, and other needs of adult newcomers require greater prioritization as factors leading to successful integration. Municipalities who pro-actively address the challenges facing newcomers will attract more talent to their cities and consequently thrive in the global, national and provincial competition for talent. On the other hand, without taking opportunities to adequately address integration, we risk an increase in racial tension, social isolation, social and health costs, and business loss or relocation. A backgrounder on The Federation of Canadian Municipalities

most recent report entitled 'Immigration & Diversity in Canadian Cities & Communities' states that 'municipal governments deal directly with the social and economic consequences when newcomers fail to settle successfully', and 'Canada's largest municipalities face the real challenge of building welcoming communities, including designing and delivering culturally appropriate plans, programs and services, and addressing discrimination and racism'^{xvi}. Indeed, The City of Calgary must take ownership of the issues hindering newcomer integration and lead the city towards prosperity for all.

Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary's Goals

1. To influence the development of a municipal immigration policy and strategy that includes measurable indicators of success
2. The comprehensive strategy carries a number of characteristics:

Comprehensive - addresses social, economic and cultural integration of newcomers within Calgary

Proactive – research and consultation is conducted regularly to ascertain community needs

Responsive – addresses existing issues such as underemployment of newcomers

Targeted and Broad – addresses the needs of immigrants, while recognizing their needs are varied and diverse, within a framework of building a prosperous City for all

Symbolic – represents The City's commitment to immigration as a positive influencing factor in the development of Calgary

Substantive – includes specific actions and an implementation plan that is vertically and horizontally aligned

Concrete – actions are specific and measurable and are supported by a commitment of resources

Flexible – can adapt to changes in migration patterns and demographic changes

3. To influence The City of Calgary to build upon external capacities and work with community members, provincial and federal government, business, and community organizations to maintain a strong municipal immigration strategy

Key Elements & Major Activities of a Municipal Immigration Policy and Strategy

Municipal immigration strategies developed by other cities have incorporated various elements that assume a specific and significant municipal role in newcomer integration. Some of the key elements include:

- the local economic development authority spearheading immigrant labour market attraction, retention and career development through sustained engagement of corporate and other potential employers;
- The City leading by example by having inclusive labour market policies that focus not only on employment but equity on various levels;
- awareness campaigns within The City and the community;
- social capital development;
- leadership in developing and ensuring culturally competent services and programs;
- encouragement of civic participation and citizenship engagement;
- branding initiatives that project a welcoming community; and,
- vertical and horizontal policy alignment with other institutions.

Major activities leading to the development of a policy and strategy should include:

- Public dialogue
- Extensive literature review
- Research and identification of promising practices
- Engagement and consultation
- Leveraging support from key political, business, and community leaders
- Solidifying support for the final product from The City and the community
- Committing resources to implementation

End Notes

- i Citizenship and Immigration Canada. 2008. "Facts and Figures 2008 – Immigration Overview: Permanent and Temporary Residents". Citizenship and Immigration Canada, RDM, Facts and Figures 2008. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2008/permanent/02.asp> (accessed June 5, 2009).
- ii Calgary Economic Development (2007). 'Calgary's Migrants: Origins, Destinations, Profiles'. Calgary Economic Development, Calgary, AB, 14.
- iii The City of Calgary (2006). Socio-Economic Outlook 2006-2016: Calgary and Region. The City of Calgary, Calgary, AB, 139.
- iv The City of Calgary (2007). Facts about Calgary Immigrants. Community and Neighborhood Services, The City of Calgary, Calgary, AB, 5.
- v Ibid, 3.
- vi Statistics Canada. 2007. "Study: Canada's immigrant labour market." THE DAILY. Sept. 10, 2007. Statistics Canada <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/070910/dq070910a-eng.htm> (accessed June 5, 2009).
- vii The City of Calgary (2008). Calgary Economic Development Strategy. The City of Calgary, Calgary, AB, 41.
- viii Good, Kristin (2004). Multiculturalism in the City: A Comparative Analysis of Municipal Responsiveness to Immigration in the Greater Toronto Area and the Greater Vancouver Regional District'. University of Toronto, ON.
- ix Statistics Canada. 2007. "Study: Canada's immigrant labour market." THE DAILY. Sept. 10, 2007. Statistics Canada <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/070910/dq070910a-eng.htm> (accessed June 5, 2009).
- x Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry. Business Plan 2007 – 10. Alberta Government, Alberta, 116.
- xi The Calgary Foundation. 'Calgary's 2008 Vital Signs'. The Calgary Foundation, Calgary, AB, 7.
- xii Chui, T. (2003). Longitudinal Survey of Newcomers to Canada – Progress and Challenges of New Newcomers in the Workforce. Statistics Canada, Ottawa, ON.
- xiii Reitz, J. (2001). "Immigrant skill utilization in the Canadian labour market: Implications of human capital research," *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 2 (3), 347-378.
- xiv Chui, T. (2003). Longitudinal Survey of Newcomers to Canada – Progress and Challenges of New Newcomers in the Workforce. Statistics Canada, Ottawa, ON.
- xv Statistics Canada. 2003. "Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada." THE DAILY. Sept. 4, 2003. Statistics Canada <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/030904/dq030904a-eng.htm> (accessed June 5, 2009).
- xvi Federation of Canadian Municipalities (2009). 'immigration and Diversity in Canadian Cities and Communities: Backgrounder'. Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Ottawa, ON, 1.