

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Community and Health Services
April 13, 2023

Report of the Commissioner of Community and Health Services

Framework for the York Region 2023 to 2026 Newcomer Inclusion Plan

1. Recommendations

1. Council approve the recommended framework for the York Region 2023 to 2026 Newcomer Inclusion Plan provided in Appendix 1.
2. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the Clerks of local municipalities, the Newcomer Inclusion Table of York Region, the Human Services Planning Board of York Region, and the Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group.

2. Summary

This report provides information on development of the York Region 2023 to 2026 Newcomer Inclusion Plan for York Region and seeks Regional Council approval of the recommended framework (Appendix 1). Having a Newcomer Inclusion Plan is a requirement of the Region's Local Immigration Partnership contract with the federal government.

Key Points:

- The recommended framework for the York Region 2023 to 2026 Newcomer Inclusion Plan (Appendix 1) builds on the [2017-2021 York Region Newcomer Strategy](#) with a goal of supporting the success of newcomers settling in York Region and three strategic pillars—economic prosperity, social inclusion and healthy communities
- Development of the framework has been supported by the local municipalities, members of the Newcomer Inclusion Table, other community partners and newcomer residents
- The Newcomer Inclusion Table endorsed the framework in February 2023
- The Plan will be developed based on the framework as approved by Council, including further consultations, and staff anticipate submitting the Plan for approval in fall 2023

3. Background

The Region supports successful delivery and coordination of newcomer services through the federally funded Local Immigration Partnership

In 2009, York Region was selected by the federal government to lead a Local Immigration Partnership, which coordinates local newcomer settlement and integration efforts. The role of a Local Immigration Partnership is to engage local stakeholders in developing welcoming and inclusive communities by raising awareness of newcomers' needs, supporting research and strategic planning, and improving coordination of services that facilitate settlement and integration. There are 88 Local Immigration Partnerships across Canada (34 in Ontario).

A newcomer strategy is required as part of the Local Immigration Partnership

A strategy should address newcomer needs and service gaps, and strengthen collaboration among partners in the sector, including local municipalities, settlement agencies, and other community organizations providing services to newcomers.

The York Region 2017 - 2021 Newcomer Strategy included collective actions that helped foster welcoming and inclusive communities

All collective actions from the [2017-2021 York Region Newcomer Strategy](#) were achieved. These included expanding stakeholder capacity by establishing working groups to tackle specific opportunities and foster linkages within the sector, and developing and rolling out the [York Region Newcomer Guide](#), a Newcomer Services [webpage](#) and two virtual Opening Doors events to enhance service awareness and navigation. Collaborations also helped address new and emerging challenges, such as York Region's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and resettling newcomers fleeing the conflict in Ukraine.

Insights from research, data, and community consultations are informing the development of the next iteration of the Region's newcomer strategy

Emerging from the height of the pandemic response, in 2022 staff initiated targeted community consultations, including with settlement agencies and newcomer residents. Staff engaged with local municipal staff and leveraged collaborative tables, including the COVID-19 Community Coordination Service Partners Table, Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group and the Human Services Planning Board of York Region. The framework for the York Region 2023 to 2026 Newcomer Inclusion Plan was endorsed by the Newcomer Inclusion Table, which is comprised of Council-appointed members, including community organizations that represent key newcomer-serving sectors in the Region.

Appendix 2 includes summary insights and more information on the process undertaken to date to inform the development of the recommended framework.

Recent data underscore the scale and importance newcomers continue to play in York Region’s population and economic growth

In 2022, Canada welcomed over 431,645 immigrants, the largest number in a single year, with the federal government announcing that annual immigrant admission targets will increase gradually to 500,000 by 2025.

According to 2021 census data, York Region’s total population increased by 63,455 residents between 2016 and 2021. Among this number, 53,495 or 84.3% were newcomers to Canada, representing a 4.1% increase in newcomer settlement over the previous five-year census period. Nearly half of York Region residents (47.8%) are immigrants, the second highest proportion in Ontario, behind Peel Region.

Immigration is expected to be the primary driver of labour force growth, which in turn is a key determinant of long-run economic growth. As noted in the [2022 York Region Employment and Industry Report](#), there were an estimated 615,760 jobs in York Region as of mid-2022. Also, according to the 2019 Provincial Growth Plan, York Region is expected to reach a total of 990,000 jobs by 2051. Over the last 10 years, the Region, on average, has added 13,000 jobs annually.

4. Analysis

The recommended framework for the Plan includes strategic pillars and objectives to achieve an overall goal of supporting newcomers to succeed so York Region communities can thrive

Research and consultation insights underlined the need to maintain economic and social integration as strategic pillars of a refreshed plan for newcomers, which were also identified in the 2017-2021 Newcomer Strategy. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the urgency of including a focus on newcomers’ health and well-being. Healthy communities, social inclusion and economic prosperity are the proposed strategic pillars for the refreshed plan and, together, influence and drive successful newcomer settlement and integration. Proposed objectives under each strategic pillar are set out in Appendix 1. Potential actions to realize the objectives are included in Appendix 2 for information, with the actions to be included in the Plan still to be determined.

Staff will undertake further consultations and collective action planning to develop the York Region 2023 to 2026 Newcomer Inclusion Plan

Continued discussions with stakeholders, including local municipalities and members of the Newcomer Inclusion Table, will identify specific initiatives, project leads, timelines and performance measures that will form part of the proposed Plan, which staff anticipate bringing to Council in the fall. Consultations will be supported by background information noted in Appendix 2, including key players in newcomer services, demographic changes and other relevant data points, and insights from research and targeted engagement to date.

Pending Regional Council endorsement of the Plan, Local Immigration Partnership staff will coordinate and convene stakeholders to build partnerships, support implementation of collective actions, and monitor and report on the Plan's progress.

The recommended framework supports York Region's Vision for strong, caring and safe communities

The framework aligns with other York Region strategies and plans, including [Vision](#) (Economic Vitality and Healthy Communities), the [Community Safety and Well-Being Plan for York Region](#) (Community Well-Being, Community Safety, Mental Health, and Economic Stability), the [York Region Economic Development Action Plan](#) (business, innovation and talent) and the [Inclusion Charter for York Region](#)'s vision for a welcoming and inclusive community where everyone can reach their full potential.

5. Financial

Federal funding of \$1,895,811 over 2020 to 2025 (\$428,705 in 2023) supports the Local Immigration Partnership, funding staff that lead development of, and reporting on, the Plan. This federal funding also supports the operations of the Newcomer Inclusion Table.

Staff do not envision any additional Regional funding beyond what is in the approved budget to develop and implement the Plan, as this work is intended to leverage, and enhance the quality and coordination of, existing community resources and assets (including federally and provincially-funded settlement services). Staff will continue to pursue opportunities to align services, build partnerships, and access senior government funding to address newcomers' needs.

6. Local Impact

The success of newcomers contributes to creating strong, caring, safe communities across all of York Region. As local municipalities deliver important programs and services to a diverse range of residents, including newcomers, continued engagement with local municipalities, including economic development, community services, and diversity and inclusion staff, will inform the development and implementation of the Plan.

7. Conclusion

Development of the York Region 2023 to 2026 Newcomer Inclusion Plan builds on previous strategies, aligns with corporate plans, and leverages existing community resources and assets to create better local conditions for newcomers to settle and integrate more effectively into York Region. The recommended framework for the York Region 2023 to 2026 Newcomer Inclusion Plan envisions an overall goal of supporting newcomers to succeed so York Region communities can thrive, focusing on newcomers' economic prosperity, social inclusion, and health and well-being. If approved by Council, the framework will guide further

consultations and collective action planning to inform the development of the Plan that staff anticipate bringing to Council in fall 2023.

For more information on this report, please contact Joseph Silva, Director, Strategies and Partnerships Branch at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 772021. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.



Recommended by:

Katherine Chislett
Commissioner of Community and Health Services



Approved for Submission:

Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

March 22, 2023

eDOCS #15002296


Appendix 1 - Recommended Framework of the York Region 2023 to 2026 Newcomer Inclusion Plan

Appendix 2 - York Region 2023 to 2026 Newcomer Inclusion Plan Backgrounder

**Recommended Framework of the York Region
2023 to 2026 Newcomer Inclusion Plan**

Goal: Support newcomers to succeed so York Region communities can thrive		
Strategic Pillar	Objectives	Rationale, Intended Outcomes
 <p>Healthy Communities</p> <p>Supporting newcomer health, safety and well-being</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build understanding of newcomers’ health and well-being priorities • Enhance service provider capacity to work in ways that are sensitive to newcomers’ needs • Expand newcomers’ awareness of and access to health and well-being services and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomers are at risk of declining physical and mental health due to socio-economic challenges they face associated with immigration. Health, safety, and well-being are interconnected and can impact socio-economic integration. Some newcomers lack trust in publicly funded services. Improving collective understanding of newcomers’ needs; expanding education and capacity building among service providers; and increasing awareness of and access to related supports among newcomers can improve newcomers’ health and well-being. • Intended outcomes: Reduced stigma in using publicly funded services; improved social determinants of health; newcomers feel healthy, safe and supported, and are aware of and can access culturally sensitive services and supports
 <p>Social Inclusion</p> <p>Building welcoming communities where everyone belongs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote welcoming and inclusive communities for newcomers • Celebrate newcomers’ contributions to the Region’s diversity and economy • Promote values of the Inclusion Charter of York Region, where everyone can live with respect, dignity and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building more connections with newcomer communities, celebrating newcomers’ contributions, and addressing racism and discrimination help increase newcomers’ sense of belonging and social connectedness. These contribute to positive health and socio-economic outcomes and creates conditions for newcomers to participate more fully and thrive in York Region communities. • Intended outcomes: Newcomers feel included, welcomed, and accepted; newcomers feel they can develop to their fullest potential in York Region; newcomers

Goal: Support newcomers to succeed so York Region communities can thrive

Strategic Pillar	Objectives	Rationale, Intended Outcomes
	freedom from discrimination	are celebrated for their contributions to the Region's diversity
 <p>Economic Prosperity</p> <p>Promoting equitable and prosperous economic pathways for newcomers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build understanding of local labour market supply and demand to enhance capacity to plan and respond • Promote a regional economy in which newcomers have jobs that align with their education, skills, and work experience • Promote equitable access to labour market readiness supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour force growth, a key determinant of long-term economic growth, is driven primarily by immigration. Newcomers bring global talent and skills to York Region communities. Newcomers create jobs, help fill labour gaps, volunteer, and contribute to local and regional economic growth. Increasing understanding of the local labour market, working with employers to connect with local immigrant talent sources, and addressing barriers to fuller workforce participation of newcomers can enhance York Region's economic vitality. • Intended outcomes: Newcomers help meet labour market shortages to keep York Region economically competitive; newcomers have employment commensurate with their education and work experience; newcomers have access to wraparound supports and employment services enabling workforce participation

YORK REGION 2023 to 2026 NEWCOMER INCLUSION PLAN BACKGROUND

Introduction

This document provides background information to support the recommended framework for development of the York Region 2023 to 2026 Newcomer Inclusion Plan (Plan). Included are information on the current policy and program landscape, data and highlights describing demographic changes in the Region, and a description of community partners, consultations to date and proposed actions. The proposed Plan will be recommended to Regional Council in fall 2023 for approval.

Developing the Plan with Community Partners

Local Immigration Partnership

Development and implementation of a local newcomer plan for York Region is driven and supported by the York Region Local Immigration Partnership, a federally funded, community-based collaborative (Figure 1) that:

- Raises awareness of newcomers' needs
- Engages local stakeholders in developing welcoming communities
- Supports community-level research and strategic planning
- Improves coordination of services that facilitate immigrant settlement and integration

Figure 1
York Region Local Immigration Partnership – Community Partner Ecosystem



York Region's settlement landscape includes:

- Settlement service organizations funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada that work directly with newcomer clients to provide language, employment, and community connection supports
- Non-settlement organizations and community partners, including local municipalities, education, employment and healthcare services, whose services also help facilitate aspects of newcomer settlement

York Region provides leadership and backbone support and hosts the Local Immigration Partnership. The York Region Local Immigration Partnership is one of almost 90 local immigration partnerships across the country, and it operates from within the Community and Health Services department.

Local Immigration Partnership staff coordinate and convene stakeholders to build partnerships, support implementation of collective actions, and monitor and report on the progress of the local newcomer strategy. Local Immigration Partnership staff also identify and coordinate advocacy for funding opportunities and support the sector through any shifts in federal and provincial policies.

As collective impact initiatives, local immigration partnerships recognize that large-scale social change is the result of better cross-sector coordination, rather than the isolated intervention of individual organizations, and convening different community actors to collaborate and innovate to address complex and multi-faceted social needs.

The Newcomer Inclusion Table for York Region serves as the advisory to the Local Immigration Partnership. Through individual actions and collaborations, members of the Newcomer Inclusion Table help bring actions in the Plan to life in the community. Members of the 2023 to 2026 term of the Newcomer Inclusion Table were approved by Regional Council in [December 2022](#).

Previous Plan

The [2017-2021 York Region Newcomer Strategy](#) featured economic and social integration pillars. All collective actions in the plan were achieved:

- Economic integration
 - Hosted third Internationally Educated Professionals (IEP) Conference providing a better understanding of York Region's employment landscape
 - Worked with KPMG on a business case to enhance newcomer employability, and York University on newcomer resiliency research
 - Promoted tools for employers to help them understand the benefits of diverse and inclusive workplaces
 - Supported the implementation of the Diversity and Inclusion Charter

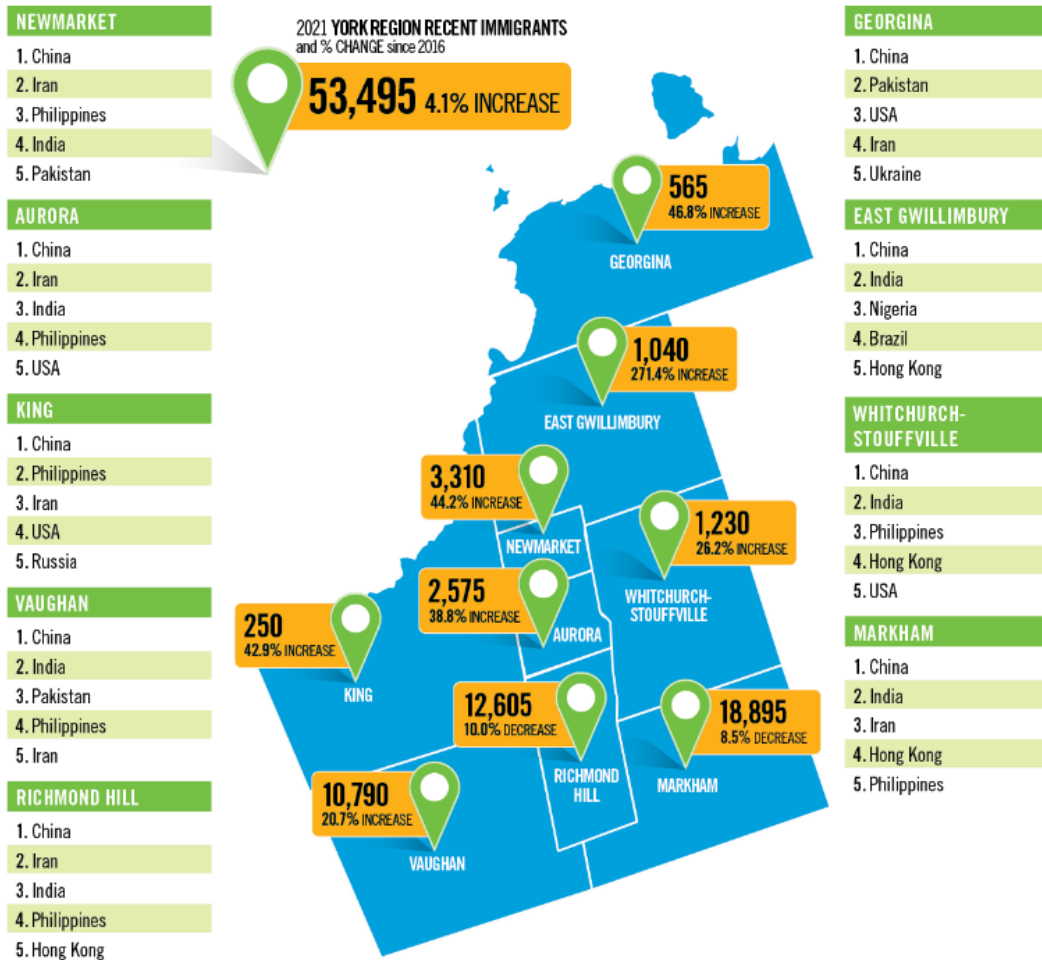
- Social integration
 - Developed a [York.ca/NewcomerServices](https://york.ca/NewcomerServices) webpage to support continued development of the Welcome Centre model and better meet the needs of newcomers and service providers
 - Developed the [York Region Newcomer Guide](#) as a one-stop resource, now available in both official languages as well as Ukrainian
 - Mapped community assets including newcomer services (leveraging YorkMaps) for easier service navigation
 - Promoted Welcome Centre community hub model as a coordinated point of service delivery
 - Developed local capacity to respond to newcomer and service provider needs by establishing working groups and creating connections with library, Francophone, and youth networks, and hosting virtual Opening Doors events that provided tools and resources to hundreds of participants
 - Worked with local municipalities and partners by promoting welcoming and inclusive communities to strengthen social cohesion

Learnings from implemented actions helped identify what is working well and should be continued, including opportunities for further planning and collective action. Collaborations also helped address new and emerging challenges, such as York Region's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and resettling newcomers fleeing the conflict in Ukraine

Newcomers Driving Growth in York Region

According to the latest census data, York Region's total population increased by 63,455 residents between 2016 and 2021. 53,495 or 84.3% of this number were newcomers to Canada (Figure 2), representing a 4.1% increase in newcomer settlement over the previous five-year census period. The proportion of York Region immigrants as a percentage of our total population is now 47.8%, the second highest proportion in Ontario, behind Peel Region.

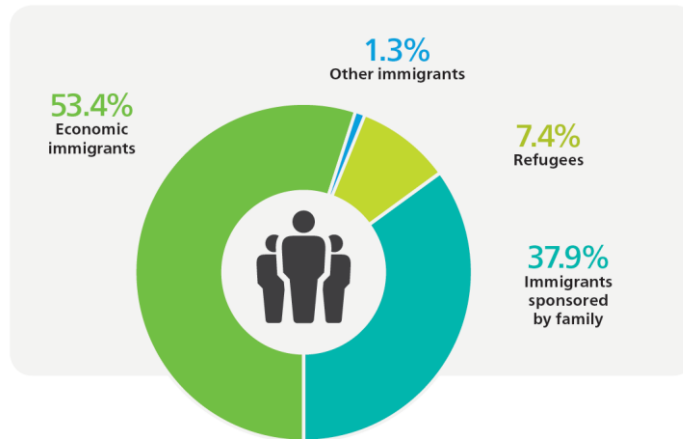
Figure 2
Distribution of Recent Immigrants by Local Municipality,
York Region, Statistics Canada 2021 Census



2016 census shows that the majority (53.4%) of newcomers settling in York Region are economic migrants, selected by IRCC for their skills and ability to contribute to the Canadian economy (Figure 3).

Recently, the federal government announced that Canada welcomed 431,645 immigrants in 2022. Currently, it has [plans to increase annual immigrant admission targets](#) to 465,000 in 2023, 485,000 in 2024, and 500,000 in 2025. During the 2016 to 2021 census period, York Region welcomed an average of 10,699 newcomers annually, maintaining high levels of newcomer settlement despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on historical experience and considering national admission targets, York Region could expect up to 19,500 newcomers to settle annually in our communities between 2023 and 2025.

Figure 3
Distribution of Recent Immigrants by Admission Category,
York Region, Statistics Canada 2016 Census



*Available Statistics Canada data at time of report. Economic immigrants include those selected for permanent residency for their ability to contribute to Canada's economy. Refugees are selected for permanent residency based on a well-founded fear of returning to their home country and seek refuge in Canada. Family-class immigrants are those sponsored by a relative who is a Canadian citizen or permanent resident. Other immigrants include those granted permanent residency on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

Community Engagement

To refresh the 2017-2021 York Region Newcomer Strategy, staff conducted primary and secondary research, outreach, and engaged (to date) over 1000 newcomer residents and community partners for their insights and lived experience.

Staff leveraged community ambassadors to create safe spaces for newcomer residents to share their stories. These ambassadors are immigrants identifying with the diverse newcomer populations they hosted, such as newcomer youth and seniors. Staff also consulted with organizations supporting LGBTQ2S+, refugee, Francophone, non-status, and low-income newcomers and more than 170 internal subject matter experts and staff across multiple York Region departments.

The Region also engaged with local municipal staff and leveraged collaborative tables, including the COVID-19 Community Coordination Service Partners Table and Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group. The recommended framework for the York Region 2023 to 2026 Newcomer Inclusion Plan was brought forward to the Human Services Planning Board and the Newcomer Inclusion Table, which endorsed the Plan's draft strategic pillars, objectives, and proposed actions.

What We Heard

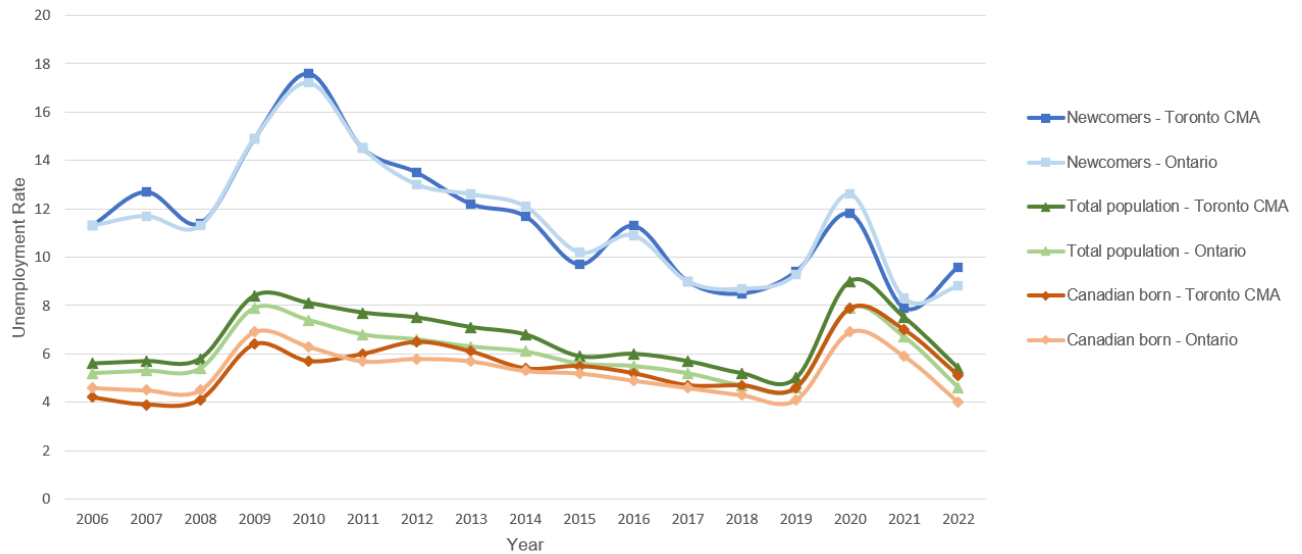
Qualitative insights from newcomers and community partners validated the literature review and the need to maintain a focus on newcomers' economic and social integration, but also expand our strategic scope to address newcomers' health and well-being needs:



Community-level indicators also validated newcomers' qualitative insights. For example, Figure 4 shows unemployment rates for newcomers in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) (which includes York Region) compared to the entire population and Canadian-born residents. The data shows that since 2006, newcomers, whether in the Toronto CMA or across Ontario, are disadvantaged in the local labour market as evidenced by persistently higher unemployment rates. The exception occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic when many accessed the Canada Emergency Response Benefit. As the economy reopened, the disparity in unemployment rates between newcomer and non-newcomer residents appears to be re-established.

Figure 4

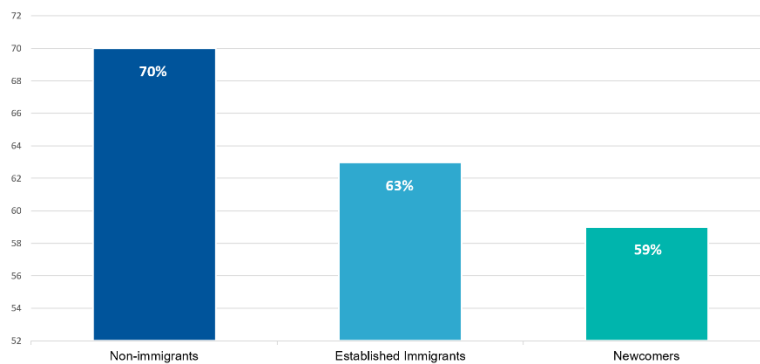
**Unemployment Rate for Adults 25-64 by Immigrant Status:
Ontario and Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), including York Region**



Notes:
 1. "Newcomers" refer to immigrants who landed within 5 years prior to the survey.
 2. Toronto CMA includes Toronto, York, Peel, Halton and Durham.
 Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 2006 to 2022.

Community consultations also found that while newcomers feel York Region is welcoming and inclusive, they want to enhance their social connectedness and have incidents of racism and discrimination addressed. Figure 5 shows that newcomers have a lower rate of community belonging compared to established immigrants and Canadian-born residents.

Figure 5
Percentage of the York Region population who feel a 'very strong' or 'somewhat strong' sense of community belonging, by immigrant status, 2018



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey, 2018

*Available Statistics Canada data at time of report. Newcomers are defined as York Region residents who arrived in Canada within the past five years. Non-immigrants are residents who were born in Canada. Established immigrants are residents who have been in Canada for more than ten years.

Recommended Framework

The recommended framework for the Plan includes three strategic pillars – healthy communities, social inclusion, and economic prosperity – and nine objectives to achieve an overall goal of supporting newcomers to succeed so York Region communities can thrive. It expands on the 2017-2021 York Region Newcomer Strategy and is based on research, data and community consultation insights.

Table 1 sets out the pillars and objectives. Also included are potential actions. These actions will be confirmed, and specific initiatives under each pillar will be developed with community partners as part of developing the Plan.

Table 1
Strategic Pillars, Objectives, and Potential Actions

Strategic Pillars and Objectives	Potential Actions
<p>Healthy Communities</p> <p>Supporting newcomer health, safety and well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build understanding of newcomers’ health and well-being priorities • Enhance service provider capacity to work in ways that are sensitive to newcomers’ needs • Expand newcomers’ awareness of and access to health and well-being services and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase collective understanding of social determinants of health from a newcomer’s perspective through additional research and consultations • Mobilize knowledge to build service provider capacity to serve newcomer clients more effectively and build more effective cross-sector client-referral pathways • Continue promoting service navigation supports to newcomers (Welcome Centres, York Region Newcomer Guide) • Develop health and well-being resources to reduce stigma among newcomers using government services • Educate newcomers on their rights (e.g., evictions) • Explore opportunities to build trust among newcomers in government, community institutions and services
<p>Social Inclusion</p> <p>Building welcoming communities where everyone belongs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote welcoming and inclusive communities for newcomers • Celebrate newcomers’ contributions to the Region’s diversity and economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build connections between newcomer communities and community service providers • Create opportunities for newcomers to learn about Indigenous history and culture to support Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action • Partner with local municipalities to promote recreational programs and activities to mitigate feelings of isolation (e.g., with newcomer youth, seniors and families)

Strategic Pillars and Objectives	Potential Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote values of the Inclusion Charter of York Region, where everyone can live with respect, dignity and freedom from discrimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish opportunities to celebrate newcomers' contributions to York Region's diversity and economy (e.g., through a Newcomer Day) Educate and engage York Region residents on hate crimes, discrimination, diversity and inclusion
<p>Economic Prosperity</p> <p>Promoting equitable and prosperous economic pathways for newcomers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build understanding of local labour market supply and demand to enhance capacity to plan and respond Promote a regional economy in which newcomers have jobs that align with their education, skills, and work experience Promote equitable access to labour market readiness supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better understand newcomers' skills, education and work experience, as well as where newcomers are underemployed in the labour market Continue to promote immigrant talent to local employers, and resources to help them recruit and retain newcomers more effectively Expand relationships with local employers to promote immigrant talent and related employment resources Promote opportunities for newcomers to build social capital, such as through mentoring programs and volunteerism Continue to promote wrap-around supports (e.g., childcare) to newcomers to reduce barriers to participation in employment services

Measuring Progress on the York Region 2023 to 2026 Newcomer Inclusion Plan

It is envisioned that the Plan will continue to leverage indicators tracked since 2011 and include measures that align with existing strategic documents, including York Region's Vision and the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan for York Region. Once developed, success of the full Plan will be measured on two levels: at the project-level, through performance measures that monitor the impact of specific initiatives to be developed under each potential action; and community indicators that track population-level trends. Potential community indicators are included in Table 2; unless otherwise noted, the indicators use Statistics Canada data.

Table 2
Potential Community-level Indicators

Strategic Pillar	Community Indicator
Healthy Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomers’ perceived mental health (Canadian Community Health Survey) • Newcomers’ perceived overall health (Canadian Community Health Survey)
Social Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomers’ sense of belonging to local community (Canadian Community Health Survey)
Economic Prosperity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Median income gap (Longitudinal Immigration Database) • Unemployment rates (Labour Force Survey)

Note: Where applicable, community indicator analyses will include comparisons of newcomers to total population and Canadian-born residents

Next Steps

Pending Regional Council’s approval of the framework, Local Immigration Partnership staff will work with Newcomer Inclusion Table and working group members, local municipalities, and other community partners to develop the York Region 2023 to 2026 Newcomer Inclusion Plan. Through collective action planning, specific initiatives, project leads, envisioned timelines and performance measures will be identified. Staff anticipate bringing the proposed Plan to Regional Council in fall 2023 for approval.