



Brantford
Immigration
Partnership



BRANTFORD IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP

2022 ACTION PLAN

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Introduction

Brantford, like many mid-sized communities, is rapidly becoming more ethnically and culturally diverse, with 2% of the total population having arrived in Canada since 2006, and more than 10% of Brantford residents having a first language other than English or French. Attracting, retaining, and supporting newcomers can have significant economic, social, and cultural benefits for the local community. Many Canadian municipalities have successfully positioned themselves as a welcoming destination for immigrants as a means to attract a skilled workforce and create a thriving, culturally vibrant community.

Local capacity to support immigrants will become increasingly critical in coming years, as Canada aims to welcome 431,645 new permanent residents in 2022, 447,055 in 2023 and 451,000 in 2024. The scope of the need to support immigrants has been compounded by a significant number of refugees arriving from Afghanistan, and additional displaced populations arriving from Ukraine, who are destined to settle in Brantford. Projections from the federal government indicate that over 40,000 refugees are set to be settled in Canada in the coming year with 43% of this population headed to Ontario. Brantford has also become a sought after destination for hundreds of international students attending Wilfrid Laurier University and Conestoga College campuses each year. The Brantford Immigration Partnership (BIP) has been established to build community capacity to support New Canadians residing in Brantford. Through collaborative work with community partners, the BIP strives to improve service coordination for newcomers, assess and monitor the needs of newcomers, and raise awareness of the contributions newcomers make to the community.

The 2022 Action Plan outlines the BIP's commitment to support New Canadians and is informed by research, consultations with local newcomers and service providers, and discourse from the 2022 BIP Summit.

For this report, “newcomer” or “New Canadian” is defined as a current resident of Brantford who was born in another country and has moved to Canada within the past 10 years. This can include persons with varying status including permanent residents, refugees, citizens, and international students.

Message from BIP Co-chairs

Since the establishment of the Brantford Immigration Partnership in 2020, it has been a pleasure to see community partners and local residents work together to make Brantford a more welcoming place for New Canadians. The BIP is a valuable community asset in enabling our ability to respond to ongoing challenges faced by New Canadians, while creating opportunities for community leaders to champion the voices of newcomers. We look forward to supporting the implementation of the projects and initiatives noted in this action plan over the coming year.

Lily Lumsden
YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford

David Vujasinovich
The City of Brantford

2021 Needs Assessment Research

To develop the 2022 Action Plan, the Brantford Immigration Partnership conducted community-based research to better understand the needs of local newcomers in Fall 2021. Data was gathered on evolving community trends and the demographics of the newcomer population. The information collected has helped to identify community priorities, as well as existing gaps and barriers in the delivery of programs. At the 2022 BIP Summit, stakeholders were able to reflect on research presented and provide input to inform recommendations that will be implemented through community development projects.



Methodology

The Newcomer Needs Assessment campaign was facilitated by City of Brantford staff under the direction of the BIP Advisory Council. Research conducted was mixed-methods, including both qualitative and quantitative components. The Newcomer Needs Assessment survey, primarily available online, was promoted with community partners and at several community events. The survey was made available in nine languages. The public campaign was successful and resulted in over 100 surveys being completed. Additional insights were gathered through informal focus groups held with both BIP partners and local newcomers. City staff was able to speak with about 20 individuals in this format.

There were limitations in the research conducted during 2021, especially due to restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Research is an ongoing commitment pursued by the BIP; thus further opportunities to engage with newcomers will be pursued in the future.



Community Trends and Demographics

The data highlighted below has been informed by the results of the Newcomer Needs Assessment where over 100 newcomers provided survey responses.

MIGRATION TO BRANTFORD

- Newcomers have been living in Brantford an average of 3.5 years
- Newcomers have been living in Canada an average of 7 years
- 49% of newcomers moved to Brantford from another city in Canada

HOUSEHOLDS OF NEWCOMERS

- 67% of newcomers live with other relatives
- 65% of newcomers live with their children
- 55% of newcomers own their own home
- 44% of newcomers are 26 to 35 years of age

TOP CONTINENTS OF ORIGIN

- 36% of newcomers originate from South Asia
- 19% of newcomers originate from East Asia
- 14% of newcomers originate from South America
- 13% of newcomers originate from North America



TOP LANGUAGES SPOKEN

- 63% of newcomers speak English
- 24% of newcomers speak Hindi
- 12% of newcomers speak Spanish
- 11% of newcomers speak Arabic

NEIGHBOURHOODS OF RESIDENCE

- 51% of newcomers settled in South Brantford (West Brant, Tutula Heights, Shellard)
- 25% of newcomers settled in North Brantford (Henderson, Fairview, Brier Park)
- 24% of newcomers settled in East Brantford (East Ward, Echo Place)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- 44% of newcomers received their university degree outside of Canada
- 28% of newcomers obtained their college diploma outside of Canada
- 23% of newcomers have completed a college diploma in Canada
- 12% of newcomers have accessed language training programs



EMPLOYMENT

- 58% of newcomers are employed full time
- 10% of newcomers are employed part time
- 4% of newcomers are self-employed
- 10% of newcomers are students
- 2% of newcomers are retired
- 2% of newcomers work in the home
- 10% of newcomers are unemployed and looking for work
- 15% of newcomers are satisfied with their current work
- 14% of newcomers are interested in a career in business

TRANSPORTATION

- 65% of newcomers have their own vehicles
- 15% of newcomers use public transit as their primary mode of transportation
- 11% of newcomers rely on family and friends for their primary means of transportation

2022 BIP Action Plan

The 2022 BIP Action Plan reflects the collective commitment of BIP partners to the success and prosperity of new immigrants. Through research and consultations with newcomers during fall of 2021, the BIP has identified key opportunities to enhance and increase accessible services, events, and socio-economic programs that focus on (1) **connection**, (2) **inclusion**, (3) **employment**, and (4) **partnerships**. This Action Plan will be reviewed annually at the BIP Summit.

Connection

What the BIP Heard About Connection

- Newcomers find it difficult to make connections in the wider community, as most find support directly from immediate family (73% of survey respondents) and friends (53% of survey respondents).
- Newcomers cannot readily access volunteer programs or identify community spaces to congregate within, despite their interest in these opportunities.
- Challenges have been experienced by newcomers in finding and accessing crucial programs in the community, such as childcare and language training (accessed by 11% and 12% of newcomers respectively according to survey respondents).
- There are some key services that have been successfully accessed by newcomers, such as the library, sports and recreation, and education.
- To improve the accessibility of programs and services for newcomers, there is a need to reduce barriers associated with cost, scheduling, and a lack of effective referrals, while generating more family-centric and neighbourhood-based approaches to delivery.





How the BIP Can Foster Connection

Action 1: Identify physical spaces within neighbourhoods (e.g. community centers, libraries, parks) for newcomers to gather, meet members of the community, and share lived experiences.

Action 2: Work with community partners (such as the Neighbourhood Associations) to implement grassroots programs for newcomers within neighbourhoods (e.g. pop-up soccer matches).

Action 3: Coordinate with local agencies to host seasonal Information fairs led by the YMCA to ensure newcomers are aware of and connected to available community services and resources.

Action 4: Leverage opportunities to embed family-friendly social and recreational activities into service delivery geared to newcomers (e.g. providing complimentary children's programming during English Conversation Circles).

Action 5: Increase access to public services and events for newcomers by providing and promoting translated documents and informational videos through the *Your Language, Your City* campaign.

Action 6: Promote programs that connect New Canadians with local volunteers who provide assistance with networking and cultural support (such as the YMCA's *Canada Connects* Program).

Action 7: Extend connections with staff overseeing the expansion of the Brantford Public Library into West Brant to better serve newcomers residing in this neighbourhood.

Action 8: Utilize sports and recreational events to create opportunities for newcomers to connect with other residents (e.g. hosting of the Ontario 55+ Summer Games in 2023).

Action 9: Support the *Child Care and Early Years 10 Year Plan* by targeting EarlyON promotion to diverse newcomer populations.

Inclusion

What the BIP Heard About Inclusion

- New Canadians enjoy many aspects of life in Brantford, such as the calm 'small-town' feel, easy access to natural environments, and affordable housing.
- Not all New Canadians feel a sense of belonging, given that over 40% of newcomer survey respondents have experienced some form of discrimination while living in Brantford.
- There are many newcomers (41% of survey respondents) who are not involved in community life (e.g. have not joined clubs or social groups), which has led to some individuals feeling isolated.
- Newcomer children face challenges transitioning into new social and academic environments at local schools.
- There is a large cohort of newcomers (40%) who are involved in faith and cultural groups, indicating key spaces in which to connect with newcomers.
- Over 60% of newcomers are online and seek out community information on social media.





How the BIP Can Foster Inclusion

- Action 1:** Support the development of a community wide Diversity and Inclusion Plan and endorse the City's application to UNESCO Coalition of Inclusive Communities.
- Action 2:** Support school boards in their goal to build relationships with parents of newcomer students, in order to enhance their comfort levels in engaging in the academic and extracurricular lives of their children.
- Action 3:** Regularly integrate initiatives that celebrate culture and promote diverse representation into programming at the libraries, Early ON centres, daycares, and schools.
- Action 4:** Facilitate partnerships to inform the diversification and decolonization of collections at the Brantford Public Library.
- Action 5:** Launch public campaigns that educate on inclusion and anti-discrimination, while celebrating the voices of New Canadians (e.g. *Telling Our Stories: Voices of New Canadians* campaign and the *Young Minds Book Club*).
- Action 6:** Launch initiatives that address the correlation between developing a sense of belonging and the mental health of newcomers with the support of Woodview Mental Health and Autism Services and the Canadian Mental Health Association.
- Action 7:** Build meaningful relationships with faith leaders and ethno-cultural leaders of Brantford's International Villages and explore opportunities to offer cultural programming multiple times throughout the year that connects with the daily lives of residents.

Employment

What the BIP Heard About Employment

- New Canadians are highly skilled and educated, as 72% of newcomer respondents had a college or university degree prior to arrival in Canada, while an additional 23% have sought to complete college programs after arriving in Canada.
- Unemployment is a concern amongst New Canadians, as 10% of newcomer survey respondents are unemployed and looking for work.
- The under-employment of newcomers is common throughout Brantford, as only 15% of newcomer survey respondents were satisfied with their current field of employment and felt it corresponded to their previous education, skills, and/or interests.
- Many New Canadians are interested in gaining employment opportunities in new fields, most notably in business (14% of respondents), social work, and health care.
- Information on how to navigate local employment systems and meet industry leaders is highly sought by newcomers.





How the BIP Will Foster Employment

Action 1: Develop a culturally informed Newcomer Employment Toolkit to assist newcomers with adjustments to the practices and norms of the Canadian labour market.

Action 2: Support the International Nursing Recruitment Initiative to assist internationally trained nurses in obtaining recognition of their foreign credentials and finding quality jobs in their field of practice.

Action 3: Support the *Child Care and Early Years 10 Year Plan* by promoting and marketing the Registered Early Childhood Educator profession as a career option available to the immigrant population.

Action 4: Increase supports available to newcomers looking to starting a new business (e.g. webinars, workshops), while building relationships with New Canadians who have become business owners since arriving in the community.

Action 5: Develop networking opportunities and initiatives for newcomer entrepreneurs and explore further mentorship opportunities within this network.

Action 6: Seek funding or opportunities for newcomers to have their academic transcripts translated and credentials upgraded free of charge.

Action 7: Support partners in facilitating paid internship or volunteer placement positions for newcomers and international students in order to increase opportunities to gain Canadian work experience.

Action 8: Enhance existing employment programs (such as Bridges 2 Work, Skills2Advance, and Construct Your Career) in the community and increase awareness of such programs to ensure they are more accessible to newcomers.



Partnerships

What the BIP Heard About Partnerships

- There is interest in expanding translation and interpretation supports for clients amongst local service providers (38% of organizations surveyed have the ability to provide such services reliably).
- Steps should be taken to work more closely with settlement agencies and offer a wider variety of supports and services to newcomers.
- There is support for initiatives that will build stronger relationships between stakeholders (including cultural groups) and enhance referral processes.
- New strategies are needed to better connect with and serve all newcomers, including those who do not seek community services.
- Partners must be more attentive in seeking, listening, and responding to newcomer voices when designing and implementing programs.
- Community partners need to remain responsive and adaptive to pressing needs throughout the immigration sector, particularly in supporting incoming refugees arriving in Canada.



How the BIP Can Foster Partnerships

- Action 1:** Establish a planning framework for BIP members to play a leadership role in a community-wide Diversity and Inclusion Plan.
- Action 2:** As part of the Diversity and Inclusion planning process, provide opportunities for partners to share best practices and engage in new training opportunities in priority areas (e.g. networking, allyship, safer space training).
- Action 3:** Create referral mechanisms throughout each sector to ensure human relationships are built into systems of information sharing and marketing.
- Action 4:** Support partners in the development and implementation of policies that will create more diversity in hiring practices (especially in terms of staff with specialized language and cultural knowledge).
- Action 5:** Establish a shared framework to enhance the collection and reporting of data to provide insights on the experience of newcomers in service uptake.
- Action 6:** Develop a New Canadian Communications Toolkit for BIP partners with best practices to share information and engage with New Canadians.
- Action 7:** Establish a Ukrainian Relief Working Group with the support of local dignitaries and partners from the settlement, health, and culture/faith sectors to form a coordinated community response.
- Action 8:** Host a community forum on the crisis in Ukraine to help ensure that interested parties are engaged, informed, and connected to opportunities to assist those arriving from Ukraine.

Conclusion

BIP partners are committed to teams of Action Tables where we will continue to support community research and the development of priority projects, programs, and campaigns that serve to benefit New Canadians. Improvements to services and program will be made as we implement and monitor actions noted in this plan. Through growing the BIP's Advisory Council and Network, the BIP will continue to educate the public, elevate voices of newcomers, and champion the needs of New Canadians throughout the community for years to come.



To join the network visit brantford.ca/JointheNetwork
Questions? Email: bip@brantford.ca



Appendix

The BIP engages representatives from various sectors including settlement, education, health care, economic development, faith groups, and cultural associations. The BIP Advisory Council is comprised of the following partners:

- Brant County Health Unit
- Brant Skills Centre
- Brant Community Healthcare System
- Brantford Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board
- Brantford Native Housing
- Brantford Police Services
- Brantford Public Library
- Brantford Region Indigenous Support Centre
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- CareerLink Employment Centre
- Chamber of Commerce Brantford – Brant
- Conestoga College
- Contact North
- Conseil Scolaire Catholique MonAvenir
- Filipino-Canadian Association of Brantford
- Grand Erie District School Board
- Grand River Community Health Centre
- Grand River Council on Aging
- Muslim Association of Brantford
- Neighbourhood Alliance of Brantford (NAB)
- Nova Vita Domestic Violence Prevention Services
- Rossini Lodge
- Sikh Association of Brantford
- Six Nations Polytechnic
- St. Leonard's Community Services
- Wesley
- Wilfrid Laurier University
- Woodview Mental Health and Autism Services
- Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie
- Victim Services Brant
- YMCA Settlement Services – Brantford



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