

# TORONTO NORTH LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP

# NEWCOMER SETTLEMENT STRATEGY

2021 - 2025



TORONTO NORTH  
Local Immigration  
Partnership

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## TORONTO NORTH LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*We acknowledge that land on which we are situated is the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, the Haudenosaunee and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River.*

*TNLIP is committed to advancing collaboration with Indigenous peoples in the work we do, specifically in the settlement sector. Through continued learning and engagement, we strive to build more meaningful partnerships between Indigenous and newcomer communities for generations to come.*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*"We always leave [TNLIP events] feeling inspired and in a better position to help our clients. For example, at a recent LIP meeting we were able to find out more about language classes and support groups for undocumented individuals. This type of information, applying to niche groups, you can't easily find on the Internet."*

*"You are playing an important role in bringing stakeholders together to collaborate, discuss, or learn about the services and programs available through government and non-government agencies in the city."*

- Member Agency Representatives

Heading into its ninth year, the Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership (TNLIP) is well positioned to further its work building a responsive and equitable service system for newcomers in North York. At the same time, looking forward, we recognize that the challenges faced by our agencies and their clients are larger than ever.

This report outlines our strategy for the next four years. We will continue work in our three pillar areas: Health & Wellbeing; Employment & Labour Market; and Settlement, Language and Integration. In each of these areas, we have completed extensive research and consultations. Our membership shared with us such challenges as finding stable work, culturally appropriate mental health care, and flexible language learning opportunities. We are also aware of the trend of acute settlement issues becoming chronic poverty issues. While these patterns may alarm us, we have heard stories of agencies working together to provide innovative programs, new partners stepping in to help, and great newcomer achievements.

Based on what we learned, we have organized our recommendations into five impact areas:

- Service Coordination
- Research and Advocacy
- Knowledge Sharing
- Capacity Building
- Systems Change

Beyond this, we have identified key operational principles that will guide adaptive and mission-oriented work over the next four years. We are committed to being participatory, transparent, and equity-focused. Finally, we have designed robust processes for planning and feedback to ensure that our goals translate into meaningful and effective action.

We know many newcomers will enter our community in the coming years, as noted in Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) 3 Year Immigration Levels Plan (2021-2023), in an attempt to increase immigration targets to drive Canada's future economic growth post COVID-19. Our hope is that they find a welcoming community and service sector in Toronto North which supports their success.

This strategy was made during the pandemic and thus it is important for it to act as a living document, one that is open to change, strives to be on top of trends, and reacts to community need as they arrive.

# BACKGROUND

Over the course of 2020, the Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership (TNLIP) renewed our Settlement Strategy to create a 'birds eye view' to guide the work of the Partnership Council and Work Groups. This strategy incorporates the input and research generously provided to us from our members across North York and establishes the key priorities for the upcoming years.

## Local Immigration Partnerships

Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP) are designed and funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to foster a systemic approach to engage multi-sectoral partnerships with Service Providers, to integrate newcomers; support community-based knowledge and information sharing, and local strategic planning; and improve service coordination, facilitating newcomer and immigrant settlement and integration.

LIPs do not provide direct services but instead build the social capital and resiliency of communities by engaging and enhancing strategic local planning with a range of stakeholders. Our ultimate goal is to leverage new partnerships and community knowledge to support the adaptation of services to better serve newcomers. Our main objectives are to:

- Support collaboration in planning and delivery of integration services to newcomers;
- Facilitate the development and application of a local and regional solutions-based settlement plan for the successful integration of newcomers that is sustainable;
- Strengthen local community capacity to foster welcoming communities for newcomers by supporting equitable integration and settlement, improving access to health and employment service delivery pathways;
- Achieve better results, as indicated by increased economic, social, political, and civic participation by newcomers in Toronto North.

## About the Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership (TNLIP)

TNLIP is led by JVS Toronto in partnership with Working Women Community Centre, and TNO - The Neighbourhood Organization. TNLIP project staff are embedded in these agencies, and senior management from the three organizations form a project management group (PMG) which oversees our work.

TNLIP convened its multi-sector Partnership Council (PC) in 2012 and established its three key pillars of focus: Health & Wellbeing; Employment & Labour Market; and Settlement, Language and Integration. Work Groups (WG) led by project coordinators address systemic barriers of access to services for newcomers across the Toronto North region.

### TNLIP Vision

Diverse stakeholders across Toronto North work collaboratively to build welcoming communities for newcomer settlement success

### TNLIP Mandate

To enhance the capacity and resilience of Toronto North service providers and stakeholders to enrich the newcomer experience and address current and emerging needs through service coordination, leveraged partnerships and community knowledge

# TORONTO NORTH COMMUNITY CONTEXT

With more than half of its residents originating outside of Canada, Toronto North is extremely diverse. The region, bound by Steeles (North), Victoria Park (East), St. Clair (South), and Dufferin/Allen (West), is home to 27% of the city's total immigrant population, as well as 30% of the city's Chinese, 33% of its Filipino, and 69% of its Iranian communities. In the most recent census (2016), 37% of immigrants had arrived in Canada in the previous 15 years.

## Income

Toronto North is also a region of high inequality. In the centre, Bridle Path and surrounding areas have the highest average income in Toronto, while nearby Thorncliffe Park, Flemingdon Park, and Victoria Village are designated Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIA), with households averaging less than 10% of the income of their neighbours. In Thorncliffe Park, where 63% of residents are newcomers, 45% of households fall under the poverty line (LIM-AT).

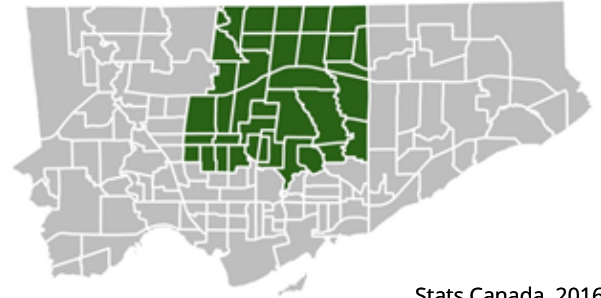
## Employment

Though Toronto North is home to more than a quarter of the city's population, it hosts only 15% (63,560) of Toronto's jobs. Most of these jobs require advanced training and credentials (professional, finance, management) or startup capital (real estate). North Toronto was the only employment zone to shrink in 2019, losing 1,050 jobs, mostly in manufacturing.

## Languages

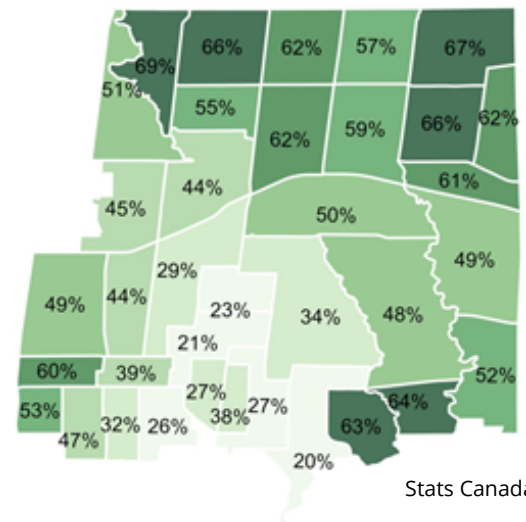
More than 50% of residents learned a language other than English or French as their mother tongue. The most common first languages are Mandarin, Farsi, Tagalog, and Cantonese. Moreover, 4.2% of all residents speak neither official language. For more stats and context in North York, visit [HERE](#).

Neighbourhoods in Toronto North Region



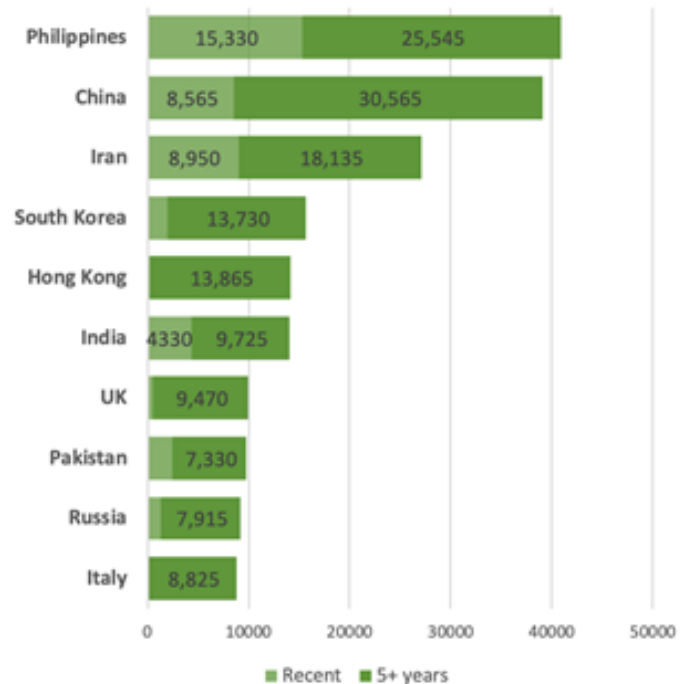
Stats Canada, 2016

Newcomers as a percent of neighbourhood population, 2016



Stats Canada, 2016

Newcomers by Country of Origin



Stats Canada, 2016

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE TNLIP SETTLEMENT STRATEGY 2021-2025

The TNLIP's last strategy (2018-2021) focused on deeper collaboration in Toronto North, as well as engagement with external and unconventional partners such as mainstream public and private institutions; used the newcomer lens to impact program planning, implementation and evaluation in the region; and worked to identify and secure resources for TNLIP sustainability. This report can be found on our [website](#).

After a few years of implementation, it was necessary to renew the focus and strategic priorities of the TNLIP as the needs of the community have evolved and been impacted by external threats, such as COVID-19. It was also necessary to renew our Newcomer Settlement Strategy for 2021-2025 to align with contractual obligations of our funder, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) over the new funding period of 2020-2025. This strategy builds on the achievements and priorities of the 2018 Strategy as previously identified by the TNLIP Partnership Council.

The TNLIP Team worked in collaboration with the Partnership Council and three Work Groups, as well as the Project Management Group leadership, community consultants and newcomers to establish a Settlement Strategy process which included: research into the Toronto North community context, Work Group strategic planning meetings, literature reviews on key issues, [focus groups](#) with 6 key newcomer groups (international students, job seekers, newcomers identifying facing barriers in mental health, youth, seniors, and the LGBTQIA+ community), and a [Settlement Strategy survey](#) to the Partnership Council. Though this plan does not review all of the information learned, reports from throughout the process have been uploaded onto our website, and we will use this knowledge in Action Planning.

Based on the insights from research and consultation, we have identified five key impact areas which will frame our work over the next five years.

### TNLIP Impact Areas

- Service Coordination: Supporting collaboration and coordination among service providers and stakeholders in Toronto North.
- Research and Advocacy: Exploring trends, gaps, and best practices. Supporting reform and innovation where relevant.
- Knowledge Sharing: Information transfer and communication with members to keep informed of upcoming trends and challenges for newcomers.
- Capacity Building: Increasing member ability to address new challenges and excel in existing service areas.
- Systems Change: Working towards a better future for newcomers by looking at settlement as a whole and boosting positive system functions, working towards gradual changes that help newcomers in the long term.

# TNLIP GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The TNLIP recognizes that the needs of the North York community are diverse and emerging. To balance vision and reality, our work will be guided by a set of principles for implementation.

- **Indirect:** TNLIP addresses newcomer needs indirectly at the system level through collaboration with our partners to improve service delivery.
- **Member-led:** The TNLIP Partnership Council (PC) and Work Group members take leadership on implementation of the strategy with support from the TNLIP team. The core strategic design is informed and co-developed by the PC.
- **Equity-focused:** All our work is conducted with an equity lens; there must not be any discrimination based on race, creed, national or ethnic origin, immigration status, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, a physical or mental disability.
- **Participatory:** The TNLIP will include newcomer voices in design, decision-making, and delivery of activities and strategic direction.
- **Open:** Communication with the Partnership Council will be timely, transparent, and comprehensive. Information is shared with the assumption of good faith.

This Newcomer Settlement Strategy is a living document which will respond to changes in the environment that are beyond our control, such as pandemics, refugee crises, labour market trends, or political changes, and other emerging issues.

# TNLIP STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2021-2025

In 2012, the TNLIP established a set of priority areas to inform our work which remain relevant to our Partnership Council, and focus on emerging needs and trends. Drawing on our research, newcomer & member consultation, we identified the following action areas to guide our work.

## 1. Settlement & Language

### Objective:

Toronto North service providers, and other stakeholders, are well-equipped to understand and address newcomer needs and build strong and welcoming communities.

### Key Issues:

- **Language/ESL:** Language learning is inconsistent across locations. Supports are often inaccessible to newcomers who have multiple barriers (parenting, disability, health, etc).
- **Housing:** Finding housing has become much harder for newcomers since 2016, with many staying in temporary housing or emergency shelters. Survey respondents emphasized that suitable and affordable housing is increasingly inaccessible.
- **System Navigation:** Toronto's social assistance infrastructure is complex and many newcomers struggle to navigate and access services. With language and mobility already a barrier, newcomers often seek support in discovering and accessing timely social support.
- **Equity:** Many newcomers fall through the cracks of existing service infrastructure due to particular barriers such as for LGBTQIA+, ESL, Francophone service availability, age, or race.
- **Canadian Culture:** Many newcomers struggle with a cultural gap between Canada and their country of origin. Opportunities to enhance indigenous-newcomer relations is often lacking.

### Key Action Areas:

- **Service Coordination:** Identify gaps in service provision for newcomers and facilitate linkages between service providers (ex. faith, francophone, senior services, etc.).
- **Research and Advocacy:** Conduct environmental scanning on acute settlement issues in North York to identify resources and service gaps for newcomers (ex. housing, seniors, LGBTQIA+, Francophone, etc.).
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Identify and share best practices to foster welcoming communities.
- **Capacity Building:** Facilitate connections between SPOs and other stakeholders, including those existing outside the service system, and find capacity-building pathways to support equitable service delivery.
- **Systems Change:** Inform policy and systems change by attending and actively participating in local and regional conversations on changes to service delivery access.

### Outcome:

Organizations across Toronto North work together to proactively create communities in which newcomers are warmly welcomed and quickly connected with the resources and services required to overcome barriers to integration.



## 2. Health & Wellbeing

### Objective:

Support and inform the Toronto North health care system to be holistic, responsive, and attuned to the unique barriers faced by newcomers.

### Key Issues:

- **System Navigation:** For many, getting care through Ontario's health system is an administrative, linguistic, and geographic challenge. This is especially relevant for those seeking help on behalf of family members (ex. seniors, children).
- **Mental Health:** Isolation, stress, and trauma are all disproportionately common in newcomer communities. These issues are exacerbated by stigma, lack of access to information, and language gaps, especially for those with complex health needs.
- **Culturally Appropriate Care:** Newcomers often feel a gap between healthcare experiences in Canada and their countries of origin. Building understanding on both sides will increase the efficacy of service provision.
- **Gender-Related Health:** Many newcomers have gender specific health challenges. Service providers have a unique responsibility to sensitively address issues relating to domestic violence, HIV-AIDS, gender roles, sexual health, family dynamics, and LGBTQIA+.
- **Social Determinants of Health:** Achieving good health requires that healthcare providers integrate their services within a wider set of social supports, especially food and shelter.

### Key Action Areas:

- **Service Coordination:** Enhance cross-agency referrals and offer information and connection opportunities for members, healthcare providers, and grassroots organizations.
- **Research and Advocacy:** Identify gaps in current service pathways and support existing networks engaging in advocacy (ex. the Network for the Uninsured, Flemingdon-Thorncliffe Inter-Agency Network (FTIAN), and Women Against Violence (WAV), etc.).
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Share and develop resources to provide agencies with comprehensive and up to date information on health care services using tools, such as service mapping.
- **Capacity Building:** Increase the ability of healthcare providers to provide holistic and culturally appropriate services to newcomers, especially those experiencing multiple barriers to service access (ex. disability, mental health, LGBTQIA+, domestic violence, uninsured newcomers).
- **Systems Change:** Remain integrated in networks and forums on systemic issues, support a structure which can inform policy and systems change.

### Outcome:

Toronto North Service providers have the expertise and relationships required to make appropriate and effective referrals. Health care agencies provide newcomers with collaborative, culturally sensitive, and proactive care.

### 3. Employment and Labour Market

#### Objective:

Enhance connectedness, responsiveness, equity, and efficacy among agencies, employers, and other stakeholders in Toronto North's newcomer employment service system.

#### Key Issues:

- **Skills:** There is a disconnection between understanding labour market trends and having the necessary complementary skills to access employment, due to particular barriers faced by newcomers (ex. language and technology access).
- **Credentials/Experience:** Many newcomers are unable to find employment commensurate with their training and experience. This can be due to accreditation issues, or lacking Canadian experience, among others.
- **Discrimination:** Many newcomers report experiences of unfair treatment based on their race, age, gender, sexual orientation, faith, or status, among others, in Canada. This occurs across the employment process, from application to advancement.
- **Opportunities:** Jobs are increasingly precarious, offering contract, part-time, or temporary work for low pay. Entry level options are limited, especially for those without Canadian credentials or experience. Newcomer serving agencies want to do more networking with employers, but struggle to make connections.

#### Key Action Areas:

- **Service Coordination:** Integrate service provision to facilitate wraparound support for job-seekers at every touchpoint, streamlining disparate services (ex. pre-arrival services, mentorship, networking, childcare, interpretation, etc.).
- **Research and Advocacy:** Identify system access issues in employment pathways, and explore alternative options for newcomers to obtain meaningful and sustainable employment.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Build internal capacity to discover and disseminate newcomer, employment-related, information and resources across relevant networks.
- **Capacity Building:** Work in collaboration to develop sector capacity to design and deliver creative pathways to employment opportunities.
- **Systems Change:** Inform policy and systems change by facilitating conversations and relationships which increase equity for newcomers facing multiple barriers to employment.

#### Outcome:

North York's employment system is able to equitably and effectively meet the diverse needs of newcomers at every step of the employment pathway, ensuring better economic integration of immigrants.

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION

### Action Steps

This document is a framework for our work in 2021-2025. The recommendations of this Settlement Strategy will be put into a long term, four year action plan that will be created in the beginning winter months of 2021 and implemented starting April 2021. This plan will act as a flexible guide for long term, systems-focused work, and will be reviewed annually to establish current next steps as needed and identified by the Partnership Council, Work Group members, the TNLIP Team, and the Project Management Group.

Work Groups will progress by pursuing activities which complement partner work, enhance equity, and creatively address emerging challenges. We will continue to work closely with neighbourhood networks and other local initiatives to maximize resources, share priorities, work collaboratively, as well as to participate and understand the larger emerging trends in our community.

### Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

Progress in our impact areas of service coordination and system change move forward in often unanticipated directions. Working in this complex service system requires that we complement traditional monitoring practices with an emergent approach to systems change.

Accountability to our members is of high value to us. As we move toward achieving the goals outlined in this plan, we will regularly seek feedback and report on our activities including: annual evaluations completed by PC members to allow for year over year comparisons and project-specific feedback such as survey questionnaires and activity debriefs.

Along with our existing practices, we plan to evaluate emergent, complex system change. This requires non-linear planning and evaluation, including:

- **Dimensions of Change:** We evaluate our success not just by measuring outputs, but the breadth (Team, PC members, system) and depth (resources, capabilities, practice) of our impact. Our strongest work improves practice across the entire service system.
- **Pilot Approach:** “Crossing the river by feeling the stones” means that we test multiple leverage points on a problem and adjust our investment towards promising solutions.
- **Adaptive:** We adjust our priorities in response to emergent needs and changes in institutional dynamics. We will regularly review the relevance of our activities.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This strategic plan was made possible through funding from Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). We also owe a great debt to community members, frontline staff, work groups, newcomers, community consultants, our leadership, and others whose generously shared insight and careful critiques have taught us so much about the reality in our region. We look forward to working with you over the next four years to make the hope expressed in this document a reality.



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