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Item No. 6
Halifax Regional Council
June 20, 2023

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY:

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: March 28, 2023

SUBJECT: Year 2 Immigration Strategy Update

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

As part of the business plan for the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs, there is a commitment to produce a municipal immigration strategy. This new strategy will build on the first Immigration strategy, Welcoming Immigrants Action Plan 2013-2017.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39, subsections 7A, 34(1) and 34(3) provide: 7A The purposes of the Municipality are to: (a) provide good government; (b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities. 34 (1) The Chief Administrative Officer is the head of the administrative branch of the government of the Municipality and is responsible to the Council for the proper administration of the affairs of the Municipality in accordance with the by-laws of the Municipality and the policies adopted by the Council. 34 (3) The Council shall provide direction on the administration, plans, policies and programs of the Municipality to the Chief Administrative Officer.

BACKGROUND

Immigration plays a central role in the future of the Halifax Regional Municipality and helps to shape our vibrant and diverse communities. Our region's economic growth, social prosperity and workforce development largely depends on our capacity to attract and retain immigrants and newcomers.

In response to the increase in immigration to the Halifax region and to help newcomers feel at home, the municipality has created an Immigration Strategy, 2022-26. Approved by Halifax Regional Council on July 12, 2022, the Immigration Strategy is an updated version of the Welcoming Newcomers Action Plan developed in 2016. The updated strategy reflects a modern-day landscape and lays the foundation for more immigrant-friendly service delivery in the Halifax region for years to come.

In October 2022, an Immigrant Services Advisor was hired in the Office Of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO Office to provide leadership to ensure equitable municipal services to Immigrant communities within HRM. The Immigrant Services Advisor supports the implementation of both the Immigration and Diversity and Inclusion strategies/frameworks.

Since it is the first-year update for the strategy and newly led by the Advisor, this update will focus on recent activity. To move the strategy forward, the Immigrant Services Advisor initiated communication with business units to introduce the Immigration strategy and to identify their action plans.

DISCUSSION

The 34 actions outlined in the Immigration Strategy are aligned to the five goals of the municipality's Diversity & Inclusion Framework:

1. **Inclusive public service:** To ensure that municipal services are inclusive, reflective of, and accessible to immigrants and newcomers without substantial barriers.
 - a. An inventory was conducted of municipal services geared towards immigrants and newcomers.
 - b. D&I office hosted 5 staff awareness sessions (2 out of the 5 were newcomer-related topics).
 - c. D&I developed 2 new training modules (Anti-Black Racism in Workplace & Building Inter-Cultural Competency) and continues to offer the existing 7 different training modules (D&I welcomed 727 staff in 47 group training sessions this year).
 - d. In collaboration with Halifax Local Immigration Partnership (HLIP), HRM distributed 2200 Welcome in Halifax (WIH) cards through ISANS.
 - e. HRM continues to offer the affordable access program, which Allows participants to purchase a monthly adult transit pass for 50% of the regular price for one year as well as provide either partial (50%) or full (100%) payment for recreation programs for children, youth, and adults in financial need.
 - f. In the fall of 2022, Halifax Regional Police (HRP) initiated consultations regarding Hate Crimes with ISANS and members of the Halifax Muslim community. These consultations were meant to begin a conversation about how HRP can best support newcomers and communities victimized by hate crimes and incidents.
 - g. Planning & Development developed a Public Engagement Guidebook to help staff develop a consistent approach to engagement for developing or amending planning documents, and to ensure that engagement is effective, accessible and inclusive. Council also directed staff to develop a new Administrative Order Respecting Public Participation for Planning Documents.

2. **Safe, respectful, and inclusive work environment:** To create a workplace that embraces and facilitates equal participation and equitable growth for all immigrants and newcomers.
 - a. Ongoing review of the existing policies and practices to ensure that diversity and inclusion are supported and systemic barriers preventing the inclusion of immigrants and newcomers are addressed.
 - b. Parks & Recreation (REC) will continue to provide service options to reduce barriers that prevent the participation of immigrants in the REC services.
 - c. D&I welcomed 727 employees from all levels of the organization to participate in diversity and inclusion training.
 - d. Ongoing update to the D&I Intranet page to include resources, documents, sessions recording, etc. to raise the awareness of policies related to diversity, inclusion and to highlight Diversity & Inclusion in our internal communications.
 - e. In collaboration with HLIP, co-organized the Multilingual fair, the international mother language day, and launched the Asian Heritage Month May 2023.

- f. HLIP hosted the local immigration partnership annual meeting, attended by 30 individuals from different newcomer services organizations.
 - g. D&I staff participated in a cultural competency training session offered by Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS).
 - h. HRP's Police Science Program, incorporates several community site visits into their curriculum. These site visits include visiting a Mosque, a Gurdwara, a Mandir, a Synagogue and the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre.
3. **Equitable employment:** To attract and retain immigrant and newcomer talent into the municipality's workforce in a variety of positions.
- a. Human Resources business unit participated in many job fairs and community events geared toward immigrants including: BIPOC Atlantic Job Fair - Attendees and Platinum sponsor, YMCA Out and Equal Job Fair, Interview skills workshop for YMCA-French Services Clients, ISANS Employment Services Discussion, Canadian Museum of Immigration "Welcome Home to Canada" reverse job fair, Halifax Partnership meeting: Destination Canada - immigration recruitment, Introductory meeting with VG and Partners - immigrant recruitment, ISANS Open House.
 - b. The immigrant services advisor initiated the conversation with business units to have targeted recruitment initiatives toward newcomers, for example, transit operators, firefighters, REC program leaders from the newcomer community.
 - c. Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency (HRFE) business unit participated in 7 job fairs this year.
 - d. HRP focused on attending diverse community group events to promote and attract potential future employees from diverse communities. HRP held a series of information sessions, many of which were with communities with a large demographic of newcomers.
4. **Meaningful partnerships:** To initiate and build internal and external partnerships that include immigrants, newcomers and immigrant serving organizations.
- a. Condensed version of the Immigration Strategy has been created and shared with immigrant-serving organizations such as ISANS and YMCA to introduce the immigration strategy actions and to navigate collaboration/ partnership opportunities.
 - b. HRFE have partnered with 7 Schools in mentorship/outreach partnerships.
 - c. HRFE partnered with Ummah Masjid in 3 educational visits.
 - d. HRP has expanded its Police Action League (PAL) program to include a new initiative aimed at newcomer families. Through collaboration with local newcomer community groups and services providers (ISANS, Sudanese Society, Ummah Masjid Mosque, Sikh Society), newcomer families are identified and given the opportunity to spend the day with a Community Resource Officer where they tour the city, attend local museums and historic sites, and are provided a free meal.
5. **Accessible information and communication:** To provide timely and accessible information to newcomers and immigrant communities about municipal programs and services.
- a. Updated the immigrant portal on Halifax.ca.
 - b. D&I promoted the use of plain language throughout all the communications geared towards immigrants.
 - c. Newcomer Climate Change Preparedness Resources have been created in 5 different languages and will be distributed with the storm emergency kit to the newcomer community.
 - d. D&I in the final stage of finalizing the multilingual policy to establish a protocol regarding the translation of materials used to communicate information about municipal services.

- e. REC created recreation programs based on community interest such as Indian dancing, Tai Chi and Qi Gong, programs in French, Bharatnatyam Dance, and soccer training.
- f. HRFE participated in 20 distinct events that support Racially Visible community members including Indigenous and African Nova Scotian communities, 5 2SLGBTBQ events, as well as 20 youth-based events.
- g. Through the Diversity Office, HRP maintains close ties to communities, many of which have local events and celebrations. HRP regularly attends events such as EID and other celebrations, strengthening ties with these communities and providing a visibility which often makes communities feel safer.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications resulting from the information in this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There was no community engagement in the preparation of this report.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Immigration Strategy (condensed version)

Attachment 2: Immigration Strategy

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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HALIFAX

Immigration Strategy 2022-26

Welcoming immigrants and
valuing their contributions
to the Halifax Regional
Municipality

Immigration plays a central role in the future of the Halifax Regional Municipality and helps to shape our vibrant and diverse communities. Our region's economic growth, social prosperity and workforce development largely depends on our capacity to retain immigrants and newcomers. In recent years, an increase in immigration to the Halifax region has contributed to unprecedented population growth.

In response, and to help newcomers feel at home, the municipality has launched the Immigration Strategy 2022-26. Approved by Halifax Regional Council on July 12, 2022, the Immigration Strategy is an updated version of the Welcoming Newcomers Action Plan developed in 2016. The updated strategy reflects a modern-day landscape and lays the foundation for more immigrant-friendly service delivery in the Halifax region for years to come.

To gather feedback on the proposed strategy, the municipality conducted two consultation sessions with new immigrants, asylum seekers and migrants. A third session engaged immigrant-serving organizations. Additionally, a survey on immigrant services was shared with business units in October, 2021, to collect input from municipal employees. The feedback received from both internal and external stakeholder groups was instrumental in the development of the strategy.

The **34 actions** outlined in the Immigration Strategy are aligned to the five goals of the municipality's Diversity & Inclusion Framework, which guides the work of the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office.



Diversity & Inclusion Framework

The five key objectives of the Immigration Strategy align with the five goals of the Diversity & Inclusion Framework:

Goals of the Diversity & Inclusion Framework		Objectives of the Immigration Strategy
1 Inclusive public service	To ensure inclusive and equitable access and benefits of municipal services, programs and facilities.	To ensure that municipal services are inclusive, reflective of, and accessible to immigrants and newcomers without substantial barriers.
2 Safe, respectful and inclusive work environment	To have a diverse and inclusive workplace free of harassment, discrimination and systemic barriers.	To create a workplace that embraces and facilitates equal participation and equitable growth for all immigrants and newcomers.
3 Equitable employment	To have a skilled workforce that reflects the diverse residents of the municipality.	To attract and retain immigrant and newcomer talent into the municipality's workforce in a variety of positions.
4 Meaningful partnerships	To develop positive and respectful internal and external partnerships that contribute to inclusive decision making.	To initiate and build internal and external partnerships that include immigrants, newcomers and immigrant-serving organizations.
5 Accessible information and communication	To communicate, both internally and externally, in a way that demonstrates, exemplifies and embodies our municipal diversity and inclusion values.	To provide timely and accessible information to newcomers and immigrant communities about municipal programs and services.

The municipality's mission for diversity, inclusion and equity:

To remove systemic barriers that prevent the full participation of our residents, businesses, visitors and municipal employees in municipal programs and services.



Immigration Strategy and Implementation Plan

The Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO (D&I/ANSAIO) will lead the implementation of the strategy, supported by individual business unit action plans. D&I/ANSAIO will work with business units to support the development and implementation of the action plans by advising on best practices, supporting community engagement initiatives and helping to develop roadmaps to success.

Through business unit action plans, D&I/ANSAIO will support business units to:

- provide public service to immigrants and newcomers
- increase immigrant representation within municipal public engagement initiatives
- prioritize immigrant and newcomer engagement in the delivery of municipal services
- provide employment opportunities for immigrants and newcomers in alignment with the municipality's Employment Equity Policy and Fair Hiring Policy
- celebrate the contributions of immigrants throughout the community



Action Item Summary

Inclusive public service

Goal 1: Ensure that municipal services are inclusive of immigrants and newcomers' needs.

The Halifax Regional Municipality will contribute to the successful integration of immigrants by improving accessibility to its programs and services.

1. Conduct annual inventory and evaluation of municipal services geared towards immigrants and newcomers
2. Hold employee awareness events (e.g. diversity cafés, awareness sessions)
3. Continue providing diversity and inclusion training modules
4. Incorporate immigrant and newcomers' voices in the development of new plans, policies and programs through community engagement
5. Continue providing Welcomed in Halifax (WIH) transit and recreation passes
6. Create and implement customer satisfaction survey about the use of the WIH pass
7. Schedule public engagement initiatives in spaces where immigrants are comfortable and during times that accommodate their diverse needs
8. Annually, host Mayor's International Students' Reception
9. Facilitate access to the affordable access program
10. Facilitate access for registration in recreation programs (MyREC)



Safe, respectful and inclusive work environment

Goal 2:

Create a workplace that facilitates the equal participation and growth for immigrants and newcomers.

The Halifax Regional Municipality will strengthen its policies and practices to ensure a workplace that values diversity and inclusion.

11. Review existing policies and practices to ensure that diversity and inclusion are supported and systemic barriers preventing the inclusion of immigrants and newcomers are addressed
12. Identify and reduce barriers that prevent the participation of immigrants in programs and services
13. Provide resources for employees to ensure awareness of policies related to diversity, inclusion and systemic barriers for immigrants
14. Employees at all levels of the organization participate in diversity and inclusion training
15. Diversity and inclusion are highlighted within the organization through internal communications
16. Partner with Local Immigration Partnership to host collaborative community-based events that support ongoing relationships with newcomer service groups
17. Host cultural competency sessions offered by Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) and other immigrant-serving organizations

Equitable employment

Goal 3:

Attract and retain immigrant talent.

The Halifax Regional Municipality will take all necessary steps to ensure employment within the municipality is attainable to immigrants.

18. Promote immigrants and newcomers' participation in municipal work placement opportunities
19. Continue reaching out and holding information sessions on job opportunities within the municipality
20. Ensure municipal representation at job fairs and community events geared toward immigrants
21. Collaborate with the Halifax Immigration Partnership and ISANS to create publications celebrating immigrant and newcomer communities and their impact on the municipality's economic development



Meaningful partnership

Goal 4: Build internal and external partnerships that include immigrants.

The Halifax Regional Municipality will develop strong partnerships with immigrants, government agencies and immigrant-serving organizations to respond to their needs and provide service accordingly.

22. Establish/maintain partnerships with immigrant-serving organizations to help ensure the successful integration of immigrants
23. Identify opportunities for the municipality to work with community partners to create an accessible, welcoming and inclusive municipality
24. Encourage initiatives aiming to enhance immigrant talent



Accessible information and communication

Goal 5: The Halifax Regional Municipality will provide timely information about services available to immigrants.

The Halifax Regional Municipality will provide timely information about services available to immigrants and promote the Halifax region's position as a welcoming and prosperous community.

25. Update, maintain and promote the immigrant portal on halifax.ca
26. Ensure the use of plain language throughout communications
27. Establish a protocol regarding the translation of materials used to communicate information about municipal services
28. Provide entrepreneur immigrants with information on municipal regulatory requirements for start-up business
29. Reduce regulatory barriers for immigrant businesses by creating a human-centered customer approach to navigating services
30. Participate in the development of a pathway to immigration tool kit for international students
31. Support community events aiming to welcome immigrants and newcomers (e.g. Annual Welcome BBQ, Supper NOVA)
32. Continue hosting recreational activities and events that support immigrants integration
33. Work with ISANS and other immigrant-serving organizations to create recreation programs based on community interest
34. Promote the Fire Safety program to immigrants





HALIFAX

Immigration Strategy

2022-2026

**Welcoming Immigrants and
Valuing their Contribution in
the Community**



Prepared by Office of Diversity and Inclusion
Halifax Regional Municipality



Executive Summary

Due to the sustained increase in immigration to the Halifax region since 2016, it is essential for the municipality to have a strategy that can help new residents feel at home as soon as possible. It is due to this increase in immigration that Halifax has seen an unprecedented population growth within the past 6 years that has helped to shape a more diverse and vibrant community. In a globalized economy, the attraction, retention, and successful integration of internationally trained and connected workers is crucial for our local economy's development and growth.

There have been plans towards more immigrant friendly municipal service delivery in Halifax since 2005. This strategy, however, is the first that Halifax will be adopting to have an integral internal approach towards contributing to making Halifax a home for new residents.

This strategy aligns to the HRM Diversity Framework, which is meant to guide the work of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. The 34 actions outlined in this strategy are aligned to the Framework's 5 strategic objectives. These actions are meant to foster:

- the delivery of an inclusive public service for new residents;
- the provision of a safe work environment for immigrants and migrants;
- the development of equitable processes of attraction and retention in the HRM workforce that encourages and includes immigrant and migrant talent;



- the continuous building of meaningful partnerships with immigrant-serving organizations as well as with immigrants, migrants and new residents; and
- the provision of timely and accessible information to new residents in Halifax.

There was significant input in the development of this strategy, both internally and externally. This included two consultation sessions which were held with new immigrants, asylum seekers and migrants as well as one session with immigrant-serving organizations where the strategy was presented and feedback was gathered. Also, there was a survey on immigrant services distributed internally to HRM's Business Unit Coordinators. Input from the Business Units was invaluable in drafting the strategy. Lastly, the strategy has been reviewed by the Executive Directors and pertinent staff across all Business Units.



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Rationale

Immigration is key to social and economic sustainability in Canada. This is especially true in provinces facing challenges with population decline and a shrinking workforce. The future of Nova Scotia largely depends on the province's ability to attract and retain talent from around the world. This is only possible by embracing diversity and by striving to create an inclusive and welcoming community at all levels.

Immigration plays a central role in the future of Halifax. Its economic growth, social prosperity, and workforce development largely depend on the Municipality's capacity to leverage its strengths to retain immigrants and newcomers who chose to make Halifax their home.

Within the last five years, Halifax has welcomed almost 80% of the total new immigrants who have arrived in the Province. Moreover, Halifax is home to almost 89% of migrants, or non-permanent residents, living in Nova Scotia, a number majorly comprised of international students plus temporary foreign workers.

Also, most of the resources available for the integration and settlement of immigrants in the province, including programs and community organizations, are concentrated in the Municipality. The Municipality has everything at hand to be the home for new immigrants, international students, and temporary foreign workers.

Immigrant Service in Halifax Regional Municipality

Since 2014, Nova Scotia has seen an unprecedented rise in immigration (Statistics Canada, 2021). Between 2018-2020, Nova Scotia welcomed about 17,000 immigrants¹. New immigrants come in different immigration categories, including economic, family, and refugee classes. These numbers align with the province's efforts to attract and retain more immigrants, as reflected in the number of immigration streams launched by then Nova Scotia Office of Immigration (NSOI), now Nova Scotia Immigration and Population Growth (NSIPG). Therefore, the province and the Municipality have joined efforts to contribute to the successful integration of immigrants in the Halifax Regional Municipality.

In terms of the immigration streams offered by NSIPG, the federal government has significantly increased the number of spots allocated to the province to nominate potential permanent residents through the Nova Scotia Provincial Nominee Program. In 2016, 1,350 spots allocated for provincial nominees were made permanent by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

This number was increased by nearly 60% through the introduction of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot (AIP)². Through this program, Nova Scotia

¹ According to the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration (NSOI) "Accountability Report 2020-2021", 3510 new immigrants settled in Nova Scotia within that fiscal year despite the pandemic.

² AIP is an initiative driven in partnership between IRCC and the Atlantic Provinces to address key labour shortages in the region.

created 2,310 additional spots for 2019-2020, making 2,700 spots since its conception in 2017. Employers can fill these spots by hiring immigrants and/or international graduates³. Additionally, the NSOI opened two additional streams in 2016 to attract entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial international students. Nova Scotia was the first Province in Canada to launch such programs for international entrepreneurs to obtain their permanent residency.

The Accountability Report 2020-2021 released by the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration indicated the number of immigrants to Nova Scotia continued to steadily rise. In 2020, the province welcomed 3,510 newcomers to the province, down from 7,580 in 2019 due to the pandemic, through the Nova Scotia Nominee Program, the Atlantic Immigration Pilot, as well as other streams.

However, Halifax still faces challenges in terms of immigrant retention. Interprovincial migration remains one of the main challenges in Halifax and the province at large. Between 2013-2015, Halifax saw considerable talent lost to other provinces; many of those who left were in their prime working age⁴. Evidence suggests a lack of pathways towards meaningful employment is the main driver behind out and interprovincial migration⁵. Although Nova Scotia still holds the highest retention numbers in Atlantic Canada at 72%, this number is still below the national average.

The Municipality is committed to supporting immigrant integration and talent retention. For this reason, the Municipality continues to develop and

³ Nova Scotia Office of Immigration (2021). Accountability Report 2020-21.

⁴ Halifax Partnership (2015). The Halifax Index: An economic gut check with insights for action.

⁵ Ramos, H. and Yoshida, Yoko (2011). Why Do Recent Immigrants Leave Atlantic Canada? Atlantic Metropolis Centre ~ Working Paper Series, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

expand services specifically targeted to immigrants. We have continued to build strategic partnerships across communities and sectors to better understand both immigrant needs and strengths.

Halifax Immigration Partnership

In 2013, Halifax Regional Council approved hosting the Halifax Local Immigration Partnership (HLIP), now Halifax Immigration Partnership (HIP), within the Municipality. The HLIP started as a three-year project funded by Immigration Refugee Citizenship Canada (IRCC). The project has been renewed three times since then. The creation of the HIP has helped to strengthen internal services for immigrants and disseminate them within immigrant communities and immigrant serving organizations. The HIP strategically uses available resources to build capacity amongst immigrant settlement organizations and other service providers through an intentional approach to partnership development. Since its establishment, the HIP has been providing opportunities to enhance the current settlement and integration services networks and to expand these strategic partnerships to better serve the interests of immigrants in Halifax. The HIP has also worked on the promotion of internal services directed to immigrants, such as the Welcomed in Halifax program, which provides immigrants arriving under the humanitarian refugee program with municipal cards for free access to public transit and the Municipality's recreational facilities during their first year of the arrival.

In 2013, the HIP coordinator created the Welcoming Immigrants Action Plan 2013-2017. The action plan integrated services geared towards

immigrants by various business units into one working document. The plan encompassed 30 strategic actions to improve immigrants' access to municipal services. The action plan has been annually reviewed and updated since then. The actions developed were based on the following five major outcomes:

- Develop communication tools to serve and represent diverse groups
- Leverage programs and services meant to support a welcoming community
- Celebrate cultural diversity
- Maximize opportunities to retain immigrants in Halifax
- Train staff to value diversity and better serve diverse clients

Below are a few examples of the initiatives that took place that supported the Welcoming Immigrants Action Plan.

The Mayor's Welcome Party for International Students

The Municipality, through the Mayor's Office, hosts this event to welcome international students and to showcase services available to them, including municipal, provincial, and community organizations with which they could engage during their studies in Halifax. As identified by the Halifax's Economic Strategy, international students are an invaluable resource to help build a skilled and knowledgeable workforce.⁶ Halifax is in a good position to realize that vision, as it has the highest number of post-secondary institutions per capita in Canada. Through this event, the Municipality recognized the economic, cultural, and social wealth that

⁶ Halifax Economic Growth Plan 2016-2021. Action Plan: Years 1 and 2.

international students bring to our region. This has been a successful and popular event. Between 2014-2019, over 2,000 students and more than 30 exhibitors participated in the Mayor's Welcome Reception.

Welcomed in Halifax

In March 2016, the Municipality launched its 'Welcomed in Halifax' (WIH) program, which provides one-year free transportation and access to recreation facilities and programs in the Municipality owned and operated facilities to refugees recently arriving in Halifax. The program is meant to support the integration of the most vulnerable population amongst immigrants. All eligible refugees get a WIH card with a one-year expiry date to access these services. The card is distributed through a partnership with Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) and its implementation is coordinated by the HIP. Other HIP member organizations have also partnered with the Municipality to offer free access to their services upon producing the card. These organizations include the Canada Games Centre; the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21; the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic; and the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History. In November 2017, this program was extended to cover asylum-seekers and other unprotected persons living in Halifax. These cards are distributed through a partnership with the Halifax Refugee Clinic.





A Vision for the Municipality

Increasing retention of immigrants in HRM requires concerted efforts that foster and promote a cultural shift in the Municipality to cultivate welcoming attitudes and behaviours towards immigrants. Making Halifax a truly welcoming community for immigrants must be a long-term and primary solution to increasing immigrant retention. Strong bonds with the community will likely translate into greater retention numbers and meaningful connections which, in turn, will lead to finding meaningful employment⁷ and into further diversifying and enriching the Municipality's social fabric.

Research suggests that there is an increased awareness in Atlantic Canada around the value of immigration, and that most Atlantic Canadians are ready to accept immigrants in their communities.⁸ It is crucial for Halifax to leverage this readiness in its population and to continue embracing and spreading positive values amongst its residents. Halifax Regional

⁷ Dobrowolsky, A. Ramos, H (2014)/ Expanding the Vision. Why Nova Scotia Should Look Beyond Econocentric Immigration Policy. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

⁸ Ramos, H. and Yoshida, Yoko (2011).

Municipality needs to continue to celebrate successes of immigrants while also acknowledging and working on addressing the challenges that they face.

It is crucial to collect data and evidence to better understand immigrant integration and the main drivers behind welcoming communities. The Municipality can be instrumental in supporting these efforts by creating and implementing policies that embed immigration into the its social, cultural, and economic priorities.

This strategy comes to affirm the Halifax Regional Municipality's statement of valuing Diversity and Inclusion. The key goal is providing services that are accessible and meaningful to immigrants. The strategy is in alignment with the Diversity and Inclusion Framework, and it draws from the promising practices achieved by the Municipality and HIP. This strategy employs the Diversity and Inclusion Framework Strategic Objectives as its guiding principles.



Diversity and Inclusion Framework

Objectives

- 1 Inclusive public service**

To ensure inclusive and equitable access and benefits of municipal services, programs, and facilities.
- 2 Safe work environment**

To have a diverse and inclusive workplace free of harassment, discrimination, and systemic barriers.
- 3 Equitable employment**

To have a skilled workforce that reflects the diverse residents of the Municipality.
- 4 Meaningful partnerships**

To develop positive and respectful internal and external partnerships that contribute to inclusive decision making.
- 5 Accessible information and communication**

To communicate, both internally and externally, in a way that demonstrates, exemplifies, and embodies our municipal diversity and inclusion values.



Implementation Plan

This strategy outlines what the Municipality should do, and how to do it⁹, to ensure inclusivity of services and programs for immigrants and newcomers. The strategy comes to life through implementation and evaluation plans created by individual business units and divisions. Business units are encouraged to collaborate with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and leverage its established networks of immigrants and immigrant-serving organizations to be part of their annual planning and evaluation teams.

Proposed actions are derived from the engagement sessions held with immigrants and immigrant-serving organizations in 2020, as well as internal engagement achieved via a survey conducted in 2021. However, we are aware that this list of 34 actions is not exhaustive of all that business units can do to ensure providing municipal services that are inclusive of immigrants and newcomers needs. Business Units are encouraged to implement the listed actions, which are guided by the Diversity and Inclusion Framework goals. These are:

- 1) Inclusive public service
- 2) Safe, respectful, and inclusive work environment
- 3) Equitable employment
- 4) Meaningful partnerships
- 5) Accessible information and communication

⁹ See appendix A for detailed how to guide on page 27



Furthermore, the Immigration Strategy will be supported by the Office of Diversity & Inclusion, the Diversity and Inclusion Champions' Table and guided by the Diversity & Inclusion Leadership Working Group.

The Office of Diversity & Inclusion will lead the rollout of the Strategy. The Office will support business units in the development and implementation of action plans. It will also work with business units to advise on best practices and support community engagement initiatives, as well as to analyze roadblocks to success and help develop roadmaps to overcome such obstacles.

The Leadership Working Group will advise the Halifax Regional Municipality on the impact of municipal policies, programs and services on diverse communities through the monitoring implementation of the Immigration Strategy.

The Office of Diversity & Inclusion in collaboration with the Leadership Working Group will ensure that:

- Business Units are proactive in providing public service to immigrants and newcomers
- Business Units will work to increase immigrant representation at public consultations to ensure service delivery that addresses their needs
- Business Units will increase immigrant and newcomer civic engagement in municipal politics and civic services
- Business Units will provide employment opportunities for immigrants and newcomers in alignment with the municipal Employment Equity and Fair Hiring policies

- The Municipality will celebrate the contributions of immigrants to the life of the community

Overall this strategy will give the Municipality some tools to facilitate immigrant and newcomer integration in the community. It has been shown that increased visibility of immigrants in all public areas, through fair and positive portrayals, leads to the successful integration of immigrants and newcomer and to vibrant productive communities (Bloemraad 2014)¹⁰. Thus, this Immigration Strategy will work on the following strategic objectives. Each objective has a number of and actionable items and proposed success measures.



Big Thinking 2014 April: Irene Bloemraad¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2CfNZnfxWg>



Goal 1 Ensure that municipal services are inclusive of immigrants and newcomers' needs

1.1 Build internal capacity to respond to immigrants and newcomers' needs

Actions	Lead	Success Measures
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct annual inventory and evaluation of municipal services geared towards immigrants and newcomers 2. Hold staff awareness events (Diversity Cafés awareness sessions) 3. Continue providing Diversity and Inclusion training modules 	<p>Office of Diversity and Inclusion (supported by all Business Units)</p> <p>Office of Diversity and Inclusion</p> <p>Office of Diversity and Inclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and impact of services geared to immigrants and newcomers • Number of participants' satisfaction • Number of participants in D&I training sessions • Percentage of participants' satisfaction

1.2 Collaborate and contribute to city-wide planning

Actions	Lead	Success Measures
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Incorporate immigrant and newcomers' voices in the development of new plans, policies, and programs through community consultations 5. Continue providing Welcome in Halifax (WIH) transit and recreation pass 6. Create and implement client satisfaction survey about the use of the WIH 7. Schedule consultation meetings in spaces immigrants are comfortable at and times that accommodate their diverse needs 	<p>All Business Units(supported by Office of Diversity and Inclusion)</p> <p>Transit, Parks & Rec, ISANS (supported by Office of Diversity and Inclusion and ISANS)</p> <p>Transit, Parks & Rec (supported by Office of Diversity and Inclusion and ISANS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased participation in community consultation sessions • Number of initiatives started • Percentage of satisfaction



	All Business Units (supported by Office of Diversity and Inclusion)	
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1.3 Support settlement sector to integrate priority Refugees and International Students

Actions	Lead	Success Measures
8. Annually host Mayor’s International Students’ Reception. 9. Facilitate access to the affordable access program 10. Facilitate access for registration in recreation programs (MyREC)	Mayor’s Office Transit, Rec, Finance Parks & Rec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of passes used • Percentage of clients’ satisfaction • Number of students and business units participating in the Mayor’s Welcome Reception • Percentage of satisfaction • Increased access to recreation programs

Measure diversity!

Measure inclusion!

What gets measured gets done!

2.1 Review and strengthen internal policies and standards to ensure a workplace supportive of diversity and inclusion, free of harassment, discrimination, and systemic barriers

Actions	Lead	Success Measures
11. Review existing policies and practices to ensure that Diversity and Inclusion are supported and systemic barriers preventing immigrants and newcomers' inclusion are addressed	All Business Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of reports submitted by BUs on their policy reviews • Distribution, use, and evaluation of resources • Development of immigration and newcomer's information booklet
12. Remove barriers that prevent immigrants' participation in programs and services	All Business Units	
13. Provide resources for employees to ensure awareness of policies related to diversity, inclusion, and systemic barriers as it related to immigrants	Human Resources, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Communication	

2.2 Embed diversity and inclusion in all aspects of the work of the organization

Actions	Lead	Success Measures
14. Staff at all levels of the organization participate in Diversity and Inclusion training	All Business Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased participation in corporate diversity and inclusion training (benchmark 2021 number).
15. Diversity and Inclusion are highlighted within the	Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Communication	



organization through an internal communication plan		
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2.3 Create and host a collaborative community of practice for partners related to services to immigrants and newcomers

Actions	Lead	Success Measures
16. Partner with Local Immigration Partnership to host collaborative community-based events that support ongoing relationships with newcomer service groups 17. Host cultural competency sessions offered by ISANS and other immigrant serving organizations	HLIP/ All Business Units Human Resources, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of cultural competency sessions held • Number of participants • Percentage of satisfaction • Increased number of external partnerships established to support services for immigrants

Unlock immigrants' talent through inclusive hiring!





Goal 3 Attract and retain immigrant talent

3.1 Contribute to the successful integration of immigrants and newcomers by providing access to employment opportunities

Actions	Lead	Success Measures
18. Promote immigrants and newcomers' participation in municipal work placement opportunities 19. Continue reaching out and holding information sessions on job opportunities within the Municipality 20. Ensure municipal representation at job fairs and community events geared towards immigrants	All Business Units Human Resources, Office of Diversity and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of immigrants who benefit from the work placement program (e.g. ISANS work placement program) Percentage of satisfaction as they exit the program Number of immigrants (via self-identification/ racialized persons) hired within the Municipality

3.2 Encourage, celebrate, and promote immigrants' entrepreneurship

Actions	Lead	Success Measures
21. Collaborate with the Halifax Partnership and ISANS, to create publications celebrating immigrants and newcomers' communities and their impact on the Municipality's economic development	Office of Diversity and Inclusion Communication, HLIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of tools created and distributed internally and externally

Goal 4 Build internal and external partnerships that include immigrants

4.1 Develop strong partnerships that support service provision and delivery for immigrants and newcomers

Actions	Lead	Success Measures
<p>22. Establish/ maintain partnerships with immigrant-serving organizations to help ensure the successful integration of immigrants</p> <p>23. Identify opportunities for the Municipality to work with community partners to create an accessible, welcoming, and inclusive Municipality</p> <p>24. Encourage initiatives aiming to enhance immigrant talents</p>	<p>Business Units/ Office of Diversity and Inclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased external outreach • Increased municipal engagement in community initiatives targeting immigrants • Number of new partners and maintained ones

**If Diversity is about counting heads,
Inclusion is about making those heads count!**





Goal 5 Provide timely and accessible information to immigrants

5.1 Provide timely information about municipal services and programs for immigrants and newcomers

Actions	Lead	Success Measures
25. Update, maintain, and promote the immigrants' portal on Halifax.ca 26. Ensure the use of plain language in communication 27. Translate and promote information on municipal services 28. Provide entrepreneur immigrants with information on municipal regulatory requirements for start-up business 29. Reduce regulatory barriers for immigrant businesses by creating a human-centred customer approach to navigating services	Office of Diversity and Inclusion CAO/ Government Relations and External Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased access/hits to the newcomer portal • Number of articles acknowledging and promoting immigrants' contribution in the hub • Ongoing evaluation on the plain language use and translated materials • Annual inventory of new businesses established by immigrants

Immigration is the main driver of the population growth in Halifax!



5.2 Promote Halifax as a welcoming community

Actions	Lead	Success Measures
30 Participate in the development of a pathway to immigration tool kit for international students	Office of Diversity and Inclusion (supported by all Business units)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased access/hits to the newcomer portal
31 Support community events aiming to welcome immigrants and newcomers such as the Annual Welcome BBQ, SupperNova	All Business Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of articles acknowledging and promoting immigrants' contribution in the hub
32 Continue hosting recreational activities and events that support immigrants' integration.	Parks & Rec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing evaluation on the plain language use and translated materials
33 Work with ISANS and other immigrant serving organizations to create recreation programs based on community interest	Parks & Rec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual inventory of new businesses established by immigrants
34 Promote the Fire Safety program for immigrants	Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participants in programs • Percentage of satisfaction



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Appendix A

How to Action the Strategy

This section gives a detailed roadmap to action the strategy.

Goal 1 Ensure public service is inclusive, reflective, and accessible to immigrants

Given the increasing number of immigrants and newcomers in Halifax, and their substantial contribution to the economy, the Municipality's service delivery has to reflect their needs and preferences. Thus it contributing to immigrants' retention and integration. Halifax Regional Municipality will continue to improve the accessibility of its programs and services and leverage its strategic position to respond to the needs of the newcomers that call Halifax home and will continue supporting community initiatives that cater for immigrants and newcomers. Here are a few actions the Municipality can take:

1.1 Build internal capacity to respond to immigrants' needs

Halifax Regional Municipality offers a number of excellent programs and services that are often underutilized by immigrants and newcomers. An example of this is the affordable access program for low income residents. Newcomers are mostly unemployed or underemployed yet, there was a low number of applicants from the immigrant communities to access these programs. **To increase newcomers' participation in such programs, municipal staff has to reach out to immigrant communities to get some insight to better plan and deliver programs and services** that are helpful to

newcomers' integration and settlement. This will increase the awareness about the Municipality's initiatives for immigrants and help spread information to them.

Halifax Regional Municipality will contribute to the successful integration of immigrants by improving accessibility to its programs and services.

1.2 Collaborate and contribute to city-wide planning

The increased number of immigrants settling in Halifax, opens an opportunity to **better coordinate and align service delivery**. In this sense, there is a greater need to have a systematic and coordinated approach to the settlement and integration of immigrants in Halifax. This poses an opportunity for **the Municipality to assume a lead role in supporting and collaborating with immigrant settlement and integration agencies within Halifax.**

Halifax Regional Municipality will lead and coordinate immigrants' settlement and integration processes.

1.3 Support the settlement sector to integrate refugees and international students

We need to recognize the large variation of immigrants' needs, as they transition towards settlement and integration. There is an increasing number of refugees settling in the Municipality every year. That brings to the forefront the need to prioritize the settlement processes for this group, as some of them may have higher needs than others, and their successful integration depends on a holistic approach to addressing their needs.

Another group to consider to is the international students group. International students are a major source of skilled and educated workforce that is needed in the region. Most of the international students in the province study and live in Halifax. It is crucial to benefit from their strengths. Retention of this group is a priority in the Municipality's economic strategy. Since 2004, the number of international students coming every year to Halifax has more than doubled (Halifax Index). A holistic approach to their needs is also desirable. International students are proficient in English and many of them may be bi/multilingual. This should be showcased and celebrated as an asset to help them transition successfully into the workforce.

Halifax Regional Municipality will support the settlement sector to integrate refugees and international students.

Goal 2 Create a workplace that facilitates the equal participation and growth for immigrants and newcomers

A safe workplace is a the place where everyone feels respected, values, and where different perspectives are encouraged and supported. In Halifax Regional Municipality, we are aware that we need to make our workplace safe for everyone; especially for people of diverse backgrounds including immigrants. We need to create an environment that encourages and facilitates equal participation equitable growth, a one that allows for new and innovative ideas to come forward and flourish. A workplace in which everyone feels ownership for, will attract more immigrant talents. In such place immigrants will feel valued by what they do. When the Municipality supports immigrants' integration and value their intercultural experience this will have positive impact on organizational practices and

workplace culture. Thus both immigrants and the organization can grow, flourish, and prosper.

2.1 Review and strengthen internal policies and standards to ensure a workplace supportive of diversity and inclusion, free of harassment, discrimination, and systemic barriers

Inclusive practices emerge from inclusive standards and are guarded by inclusive policies. A comprehensive review of existing policies and practices must be conducted to ensure that there are no current systemic barriers preventing immigrant talent to join the Municipality's workforce, or to immediately eliminate barriers once they are identified.

Awareness is the first step towards successful change, and it is important to ensure proper tools and training are put in place both for senior leadership and staff. Upon reviewing existing standards and policies, resources will be identified and produced to raise awareness, strengthen inclusive practices, and support strategic change.

Halifax Regional Municipality will strengthen its policies and practices to ensure a workplace that values diversity and inclusion.

2.2 Embed diversity and inclusion in all aspects of the work of the organization

Making inclusion part of the organization's work culture requires a shared understanding of the value of diversity and inclusion. Participation in training from all levels in the organization will be instrumental in facilitating spaces for shared understanding and values that will promote inclusive practices across the Municipality.

An aligned message that allows for diverse interpretations and views must be clearly communicated to and among all the Municipality's employees. A shared vision about what an inclusive municipality looks like will become the focus of a communications plan that will allow for the creation of diverse paths towards the implementation of practices that both align to an inclusive message and lead to a shared vision.

Halifax Regional Municipality will embed diversity and inclusion values in all policies, practices, and communication.

2.3 Create and host a collaborative community of practice for partners related to services to immigrants and newcomers

A few divisions within the Municipality are providing great services to immigrants and building strong relationships with immigrant servicing organizations. Those divisions should connect with each other and exchange learnings and best practices in engaging with immigrants and newcomers. As well, the Halifax Local Immigration Partnership has well established networks within the immigrants communities and organizations. Business units can leverage these networks to benefit both immigrants and the organization. Activities such as hosting collaborative community-based events will go along way in supporting relationships with newcomers and organizations serving them. Existing communities of practice must be identified and reached out to, in order to foster inclusive dialogues and open conversations that help inform pathways towards implementing a shared vision of a diverse workforce thriving in an inclusive workplace.

Halifax Regional Municipality will support collaboration between internal communities of practice and foster inclusive dialogue between them and external networks.

Goal 3 Attract and retain immigrant talent

Immigrants are making Halifax more diverse and prosperous with their contribution in private and public sectors. It is a well-researched fact that diversity has a direct correlation with innovation. A diverse workforce is a place that is reflective of the community it serves at all levels. The Municipality needs to include immigrant talent in its operations and ensure that employment opportunities reach immigrant communities. That can be done by creating a platform for immigrants to learn about employment opportunities in the organization so that they can:

- better understand the organizational procedures before applying
- receive mentorship and guidance that help them reach their potential and move up inside the organization
- have their needs not only properly accommodated but also fairly understood

It is documented that immigrants are twice more likely than Canadian-born to start a business in Canada. The Municipality can take a lead in supporting immigrant entrepreneurs. *Celebrating is promoting*. This is particularly true for Halifax Regional Municipality because of its visibility and credibility. The Municipality has an instrumental role in supporting the success of immigrant entrepreneurs by supporting mechanisms that

celebrate them and that, in consequence, makes them visible in the community and promotes them.

3.1 Contribute to successful integration of immigrants by providing access to employment opportunities

Employment is consistently defined as the most important factor in the attraction, integration, and retention of immigrants and yet, the most challenging. The Municipality needs to lead by example in making employment within it attainable for immigrants. Activities to be considered include workplacement; pathways towards gaining Canadian experience; increased representation in community (i.e., job fairs); more proactive recruitment (partnership with ISANS, universities, etc.)

We need to explore some good practices proven to be helpful in providing local work experience. An example of these is the Welcome to Canada Program which is a paid work placement Immigration Museum, Pier 21 provides for permanent residents. This initiative proved to be helpful in breaking the barrier of gaining local work experience and successfully integrating immigrants into the workforce (Allies 2015). This kind of placement offers more time for employers to fairly assess the employees' potential and the employee to further develop soft skills as they familiarize with their new workplace.

Halifax Regional Municipality will take all necessary steps to ensure employment within THE MUNICIPALITY is attainable to immigrants

3.2 Encourage, celebrate and promote immigrants' entrepreneurship

A recent study has shown that immigrants are more likely to start a business than Canadian-born citizens (ISANS). Thus immigrants provide

employment opportunities for the communities where they live. Entrepreneurship plays a great role in the economic growth of the Municipality (Halifax Economic Growth Plan). Supporting entrepreneurs also aligns with the Municipality's Strategic Plan 2021-2026. Celebrating immigrant entrepreneurs is an opportunity to increase their visibility and reward equitable, community-oriented, innovative practices. We can do that by developing proper channels (publications, online presence, etc.) to make these celebrations visible and to keep them relevant.

Halifax Regional Municipality will support immigrants' integration through celebrating immigrant entrepreneurs.

Goal 4 Build internal and external partnerships that include immigrants

Collaboration is the key to collective success. Intentional and strategic collaboration means the creation of and participation in networks where the Municipality's voice is represented, and where its resources are made available for partners. With the emphasis that diversity and inclusion has been given in the organization within the recent years, there is an increasing number of internal networks in the organization that could be better supported through the strategic development of external networks that respond to a shared vision.

As public service, the Municipality's presence in the community is key to developing relations and build trust among residents that can result in increased participation and greater civic engagement. This presence will result in better informed decision-making and more inclusive service delivery.

Goal 4 Build internal and external partnerships that include immigrants

There are a lot opportunities for the Municipality to collaborate with government agencies and community organizations to inform community-based service provision and programming for immigrant. A great example of those is the Halifax Local Immigration Partnership collaboration with external partners for wider and stronger public impact. Working together is essential to focus efforts and share learning.

Halifax Regional Municipality will develop strong partnership with immigrants, government agencies, and immigrant serving organizations to respond to their needs and provide service accordingly.

Goal 5 Provide timely and accessible information to immigrants

A major objective identified by research and consultation related to immigrants' integration is providing timely access to information and improving information sharing. There is consensus amongst stakeholders that better communication in these two areas will lead to better and faster integration for immigrants.

A community's ability to attract and retain immigrants is influenced by access to basic needs and services, participation in community life, public safety, and having a welcoming community. Halifax is a prosperous, healthy, and safe city with abundant natural beauty, good job opportunities, and world renown post secondary institutions. Halifax Regional Municipality needs to promote its best qualities through timely providing and sharing information to attract immigrants and newcomers.

5.1 Provide timely information about municipal services and programs for immigrants and newcomers

The primary reason for immigrants not accessing settlement and community services is the lack of awareness about their availability. It is reported that obtaining concise, timely, and easily understandable information plays a major role in immigrant integration (Esses, et al, 2010).

Halifax Regional Municipality will provide timely information about services available to immigrants.

5.2 Promote Halifax as a welcoming community

With the increase of allocation for the Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP), and the growing emphasis on the attraction and retention of international students and entrepreneurs, plus the establishment of the Atlantic Immigration Program, post-secondary institutions and employers are playing an active and important role in the settlement process of immigrants. This highlights the need for an integrated approach with post-secondary institutions and employers to develop community-wide promotional tools that showcase Halifax as a welcoming environment to study, work, create a business, raise a family, create community connections, and celebrate the value of diversity.

Halifax Regional Municipality will promote its position as a welcoming and prosperous community.

We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their colour.
Maya Angelou