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**Item No. 4**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**August 20, 2024**

**TO:** Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** April 11, 2024

**SUBJECT:** Year 3 Immigration Strategy Update

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**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

As part of the regional 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**

As we embark on the second year of the Immigration Strategy 2022-26, the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) remains steadfast in its commitment to fostering an inclusive and immigrant-friendly community. With immigration continuing to play a pivotal role in shaping the fabric of our region, the engagement of business units and community partners becomes increasingly vital in realizing our shared vision of a welcoming Halifax.

Building upon the groundwork laid in the inaugural year, the Immigrant Services Advisor focused in the second year on deepening engagement with business units and cultivating partnerships within newcomer communities. With the overarching goal of ensuring that our immigrant residents are aware of and benefit from the Immigration Strategy, efforts will be directed towards amplifying outreach, inclusive municipal services, and dissemination of key information.

From facilitating dialogue between business units and newcomer communities to leveraging community partnerships for greater impact, the Immigrant Services Advisor played a pivotal role in bridging gaps and fostering collaboration. Through strategic initiatives and targeted outreach, HRM aims to create an environment where newcomers feel valued, supported, and empowered to thrive.

Throughout this report, we will highlight the collaborative efforts of various HRM business units in advancing immigrant services across five key pillars: Inclusive Public Service, Safe, Respectful, and Inclusive Work Environment, Accessible Information and Communication, Equitable Employment, and Meaningful Partnerships.

From initiatives aimed at ensuring access to municipal services to the promotion of diversity and inclusion in the workplace, HRM is dedicated to creating a community where all residents, regardless of background, feel valued and included. Through strategic partnerships, community engagement, and proactive initiatives, we continue to work towards building a more welcoming and inclusive Halifax for everyone.

Below are the highlights from the previous year, showcasing the accomplishments and initiatives undertaken by HRM in support of immigrant services during the 2023/24 fiscal year.

## **DISCUSSION**

In this report, we'll discuss the progress made under each pillar during the 2023/24 fiscal year, highlighting HRM's collective efforts in supporting immigrant services. It's worth noting that the Immigration Strategy's 34 actions are aligned with the goals of the Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) framework, ensuring our approach is cohesive.

1. **Inclusive public service:** To ensure that municipal services are inclusive, reflective of, and accessible to immigrants and newcomers without substantial barriers.
  - a. Continued the commitment to conducting an annual inventory of municipal services tailored to meet the needs of immigrants and newcomers.
  - b. Through the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP), HRM distributed 2350 welcome in Halifax passes (WIH) in 2023.
  - c. In partnership with YMCA Centre for Immigrants and HRM public safety office, the Immigrant Services Advisor led the development of an educational video resource as well as half day inter-cultural competency training to be offered to HRM frontline staff who serve newcomers youth. The agreement is that the YMCA will provide at least a monthly training session.
  - d. D&I office and the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) supported the mayor's office to organize a mayor's reception to first year International Students
  - e. With the support of the Immigrant Services Advisor, Parks & Recreation staff conducted information sessions along with community partners to walk participants through the registration process for programs.
  - f. Hosted information session for newcomers at the YMCA to facilitate access to the affordable access program, and to help with on-spot registration in recreation programs (MyREC).
  - g. Hate Crime consultations were initiated with a variety of newcomer community groups and service providers. These consultations are ongoing and aim to strengthen HRP's relationship with newcomers and assist in improving Hate Crime and Hate Incident reporting from these communities. To date, newcomer group consultations have included members from the Muslim Community, the Sudanese Society of Nova Scotia, the Ashram Vedanta Society, the Chinese Society of Nova Scotia, the Chinese Benevolent Society, HRM's Diversity and Inclusion Office, and Immigration Service Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS).
  - h. Emergency Management Office hosted series of focus groups in various communities regarding HRVA and the VVPR.

- i. In partnership with Halifax Public Libraries, the municipality launched public engagement activities to gain feedback on climate action in our communities. Storm kits were distributed prior to Hurricane Lee.
    - j. In Fall 2023, Halifax Transit facilitated Transit Travel Training sessions for international students through International Student Drop In events at Saint Mary's University, and Dalhousie University. These sessions were well attended, and How to Ride Transit training materials were provided in 6 different languages.
    - k. In winter 2023, an interactive How to Ride Transit event was hosted for Youth newcomers through a strategic partnership with ISANS. This session included an interactive How to Ride Transit presentation, followed by an opportunity to board a Halifax Transit Bus.
  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. Parks & Recreation hired staff that are multi-lingual to better support access to recreation programs.
    - b. Parks & Recreation identified language barriers & have used translation services to support newcomer families wanting to participate in some programs, as required.
    - c. School groups and other organizations were able to access the group paddling programs and allow many Canadian newcomers to get out on the water.
    - d. The Police Science Program, HRP's in-house cadet class, incorporates a number of community site visits into its curriculum. These site visits include visiting a Mosque, a Gurdwara, a Mandir, a Synagogue, and the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre. Visiting these locations provides cadets with the opportunity to interact with community members, learn first-hand from community leaders about police service delivery and explore the diverse make up of Halifax's population.
    - e. The Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) is collaborating with HRM's Immigrant Services advisor to support the development of intercultural training for HRM staff.
    - f. The Youth Worx Program recruit newcomer youths to gain job experience. In 2023/24, two newcomer participants successfully graduated from the program and are currently employed as casual staff.
    - g. HRP updated the policy relating to an employee's wearing of headdresses is currently being revised. Changes will include adding language to qualify the acceptable wearing of cultural or religious headdress including Hijabs, Turbans and other religious headdress. It is hopeful this change will lower barriers to many people with diverse backgrounds who believe their culture would prevent them from becoming a police officer.
    - h. Public Safety office created a report "Combatting Islamophobia and Improving the Safety of Muslim Women and Girls" was presented to and approved by Regional Council. In response to the report's recommendations, the municipality will strike a working group tasked with creating an action plan to combat Islamophobia and improve the safety of Muslim women and girls, seek funding for this work and return to Regional Council with an update on progress on these efforts.
3. **Equitable employment:** To attract and retain immigrant and newcomer talent into the municipality's workforce in a variety of positions.
  - a. Human Resources Talent Acquisition team, in collaboration with the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS), conducted a comprehensive recruitment session on January 25th. The session aimed to educate newcomers about Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) as a potential employer, familiarize them with current job opportunities, highlight the benefits and perks of working with HRM, and articulate the compelling reasons why one should consider a career with the municipality.
  - b. During the period spanning April 2023 to March 2024, the Human Resources Talent Acquisition team, in collaboration with French Services, initiated a fruitful partnership with YMCA-NS Works to support Francophone and bilingual newcomer job seekers

- in their employment endeavors. This partnership aimed to provide essential resources and guidance to individuals seeking opportunities within the municipal job sector.
- c. The Immigrant Services Advisor hosted 2 information sessions on Bridging the Gap program and shared the information Packages with immigrants' serving agencies.
  - d. The Local Immigration Partnership is currently researching, under its working groups, how newcomers access services in Halifax and employment retention rate of immigrants in the Halifax Regional Municipality.
  - e. The Local Immigration Partnership has continued to support the newcomer/immigrant community within its mission: To champion an environment of shared sense of belonging amongst all residents of HRM.
  - f. The recent Police Science Program recruitment efforts have focused on connecting with a variety of diverse community groups, including newcomer groups and service providers. HRP's recruitment outreach have included holding in person recruitment sessions at the Ummah Masjid, on online information session with ISANS and sharing recruitment materials with a variety of newcomer groups through e-mail.
  - g. Human Resources posted a term Immigration Specialist position. This role plays a pivotal role in supporting HRM staff by facilitating the recruitment strategy aimed at garnering interest in Halifax Regional Municipality among new Canadians. The Immigration Specialist also contributes to attracting a diverse pool of candidates for challenging vacancies by offering immigration support related to employment. Additionally, this position provides consultation services, assisting foreign workers who are prospective employees with the preparation of documentation and information necessary for their immigration applications.
4. **Meaningful partnerships:** To initiate and build internal and external partnerships that include immigrants, newcomers and immigrant serving organizations.
- a. The Immigrant Services Advisor established 7 new connections with the Chinese, Nigerian, Indian, Somali, Afghani, Korean and Pakistani communities.
  - b. In collaboration with public safety office, YMCA centre for immigrants, the Immigrant Services Advisor led the work on the culturally responsive services for racialized newcomer, refugee and immigrant youth. The project resulted in an Asset Map of culturally responsive services in Halifax for newcomer youth affected by violence that includes mental health services, practitioners, cultural leaders, faith-based supports, and other resources for healing from violence-related harm. It also includes recommendations for the Municipality to support local service providers in coordinated violence prevention and intervention efforts for newcomer youth, especially in communities disproportionately impacted by colonization and trauma.
  - c. In collaboration with the Mi'kmaq Friendship Center, the LIP brought together newcomers from various background to learn about Powwow protocols, participants were able to follow the presentation with materials translated to 6 different languages.
  - d. HRP shares close ties with ISANS and other partners on a number of different initiatives. Police, including the Crime Prevention Crime Reduction (CRCP) unit and the Diversity Officer, deliver presentations and information to newcomer community groups and service providers. For example, the police deliver a presentation to the ISANS' Immigrant Youth Employment Program to explain local policing practices and procedures to newcomers with the aim of decreasing fear of police. The CRCP Unit also engages in and attends a number of community events aimed at supporting newcomer groups. HRP's Hate Crimes Unit has also completed information session to ISANS employees to better equip them with knowledge that can help them support newcomers who are the victims of Hate Crimes or Incidents.
  - e. HRP's Victim Services liaises with a variety of newcomer service providers including ISANS to assist newcomers through various legal processes. This can include helping victims obtain forms and identification whilst guiding them through the criminal justice or legal system.

- f. HRP is developing its relationship with the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) and is looking forward to being more involved in LIP initiatives and discussions in the near future. Currently, HRP is scheduled to present on Hate Crimes at its upcoming 2024 AGM and is also working toward participating in LIP's working groups which aim to support the integration of newcomers to Halifax.
  - g. HRFE participated in Diverse communities' events – Get to know Your Community, Ummah Majid Mosque/Eid el-Fitr, Francophonie month, Lunar New Year messaging and awareness.
  - h. Canada Games Centre has a partnership program with ISANS to provide access to swimming programs and karate lessons.
  - i. Several Parks & Recreation staff sit on the RAN (Recreation Access for Newcomers) partnership committee which includes members from immigrant-serving organization and other government bodies.
5. **Accessible information and communication:** To provide timely and accessible information to newcomers and immigrant communities about municipal programs and services.
- a. In collaboration with the Mi'kmaq Friendship Center, the LIP brought together newcomers from various background to learn about Powwow protocols, participants were able to follow the presentation with materials translated to 6 different languages.
  - b. The D&I office took a significant step by creating the Multilingual Policy. This policy serves as a guideline for all business units within HRM regarding the translation of HRM materials. By establishing clear protocols and standards for translating materials into multiple languages, the Multilingual Policy ensures that our communications are accessible to all members of our diverse community. This policy is in the final approval stages.
  - c. In the fiscal year of 2023/2024, LIP has done events to support its mandate and two Multilingual Fair events happened in February and October 2023, where Community Associations showcased their mother tongue with the public and their community members to expose the diversity of languages spoken in Halifax.
  - d. The LIP has again brought together multiple HRM business units and external organizations to the Get to Know your Municipality event to expose essential services to newcomer/immigrant community.
  - e. To recognize the World Refugee Day on June 20th, the LIP brought together organizations that support residents with refugee status and asylum seekers in Canada to bring awareness to the general public about refugees in Halifax. The group spent an afternoon in the Central Library Plaza inviting the public to share messages of hope to refugees and inviting them to watch a documentary created by a refugee about their life journey at Paul Oregan Hall.
  - f. Through the Diversity Officer, 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.
  - g. The Police Activity League (PAL) organizes athletic activities in schools and with youth in the community. The outreach element has added a focus on newcomer groups, and, with the help of stakeholders, the PAL program was able to connect with its first newcomer family in June.
  - h. Parks & Recreation staff contributed to several events, including the Mayor's Reception for International Students.
  - i. Parks & Recreation staff, in partnership with ISANS, YMCA and other newcomer communities, promoted and supported the Northern Lights Lantern Festival (NLLF) which provided opportunities for newcomers to volunteer/perform at the festival as well as Halah food options. D&I office continue to lead the work on the Asian heritage month.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications at this time.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

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

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: the Immigration Strategy (condensed version)

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://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
<b>1</b> <b>Inclusive public service</b>	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.
<b>2</b> <b>Safe, respectful and inclusive work environment</b>	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.
<b>3</b> <b>Equitable employment</b>	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.
<b>4</b> <b>Meaningful partnerships</b>	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.
<b>5</b> <b>Accessible information and communication</b>	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

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### 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

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### 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

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### 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







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