

Starting on solid ground: the municipal role in immigrant settlement

Key facts and figures

Our economy

- By 2015, 100 percent of Canada's labour growth will come from new immigrants.
- In 2010, Canada admitted a record 281,681 permanent residents. The total number of new residents was close to 558,957 (including temporary foreign workers and foreign students).
- The Toronto Board of Trade estimates it costs Canada \$2.25 billion annually in lost economic activity when we fail to better integrate immigrants into the economy.

Immigrants falling behind

- Two-thirds of university-educated newcomers are underemployed. They work in occupations that require at most a college education. This compares with 40 per cent of their Canadian counterparts.
- The unemployment rate among immigrant newcomers with university degrees was 8.6 per cent in 2009, compared with 3.5 per cent among Canadian-born graduates.

The municipal role

- Our cities and communities welcome newcomers but are neither mandated nor funded to provide settlement services.
- Municipalities are the first point of contact in providing shelter to refugees and grants to community-based organizations, and in enhancing programs at local community centres.
- Collecting just eight cents of every Canadian tax dollar paid, municipalities alone cannot ensure a high quality of life and welcoming environment for newcomers.

Housing

- Rising housing prices and rental shortages from decades of low levels of purpose-built rental supply make it difficult for moderate-income earners to find adequate housing.
- 44 per cent of recent immigrant renters in Canada are in core housing need. They spend more than 30 per cent of their income on housing, compared with less than 25 per cent of non-immigrant renters.
- The potential loss of one-third of Canada's social housing stock reduces access to housing overall. This further squeezes out newcomer immigrants.

Transit

- New immigrants are twice as likely to commute by public transit, compared with Canadian-born workers.
- There are significant challenges involved in providing much-needed services such as medical care, counselling, and job and language training to newcomers who are isolated due to poor transit options.
- Traffic delays cost Canada more than \$5 billion in 2009. Today's cost is likely much higher.
- The OECD cites Toronto's economic cost of gridlock to be \$3.3 billion annually.