



WELCOMING
COMMUNITIES
INITIATIVE

Welcoming Communities Initiative

(february 2011)



INITIATIVE DES
COMMUNAUTÉS
ACCUEILLANTES

Background and Premises

- Changing face of Ontario communities: “recent immigrants and established immigrants appear to be shifting to suburban areas and smaller communities.” (FCM, March 2009)
- Many federal and provincial government departments are expressing a strong interest in regionalization (e.g., CIC, OMAFRA, MCI, FEDNOR)
- Increasing recognition of need for population renewal in centres outside of Toronto
- Social, political, and economic challenges: cities must work on accommodating the ethnic, racial, religious, and linguistic diversity already in place, as well as generated by the entry of newcomers, immigrants, and second and third generations

- Challenges to meeting the needs of a more diverse community:
 - “selling it” to long-term residents
 - removing barriers to full participation: economic, social
 - reconfiguring existing services, new models of service delivery
 - identifying and capitalizing on the diversity advantage
 - new ways of living together, new forms of spatial and social belonging
 - implementation and coordination
- **Welcoming Communities Initiative:** developed to help meet these challenges - capitalizes on local community expertise and intellectual capacity in world-class universities across the province
- Aim is to work with stakeholders to identify strategic priorities, conduct analyses, and shape policy guidance and practical advice

Major Project Goals

- 1) Strengthen municipal capacity to attract and benefit from diversity, particularly in 2nd and 3rd tier Ontario cities
- 2) Strengthen the capacity of the voluntary sector to contribute to equitable and inclusive communities
- 3) Maximize the economic benefits of diversity, particularly for 2nd and 3rd tier Ontario cities
- 4) Contribute to policy and program development by federal and provincial ministries

- 5) Understand barriers to social cohesion, and test and implement strategies for creating and sustaining communities in which all members feel comfortable and valued
- 6) Share findings and recommendations widely
- 7) Train highly skilled personnel: training opportunities for students, postdoctoral fellows, community personnel, faculty

Key Players

- **Researchers at 18 Ontario Universities**
- **Universal Service Providers**
- **Immigrant-Serving and Ethnocultural Agencies and Associations**
- **School Boards**
- **Municipal and Regional Government Departments**
- **Association of Municipalities**
- **Business and Employment Associations and Networks**
- **National Associations**
- **National Research Organizations**
- **Provincial Government Departments**
- **Federal Government Departments**

Important Feature:

Collaborative arrangements with Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) Councils: designed to optimize efficiencies and effectiveness

Research Strategies

- **Comparative studies**
- **Multidisciplinary, multi-method**
- **Iterative process with continual refinement as new knowledge and questions are generated by the research process and by new interests and events**
- **Scholarship of engagement**
- **Started with CMAs outside of Toronto, and are now expanding**

Communication and Education Strategies

- **Annual Conference**
- **Workshops**
- **Website and Monthly E-Bulletin**
- **Policy Briefings and Presentations**
- **Summer Institute**
- **Best Practices Training Modules**
- **Tool Kits**
- **Collaboration with Local LIP Committees, United Ways, Municipalities**
- **Curriculum Resources**
- **Public Speaker Series**
- **Community and Academic Publications**

Initial Projects

- City Profiles, and Inventories and Audits of Local Resources, Services, and Structures
- Making Ontario Home - Newcomer Settlement Services Needs and Use (OCASI and MCI)
- Newcomer Settlement Information Testing, e.g., Welcome to Canada (CIC, Integration Branch)
- Who is Running (in) our Diverse Cities? Ethnic and Visible Minorities in Ontario Municipal Elections

- Factors Affecting the Integration of Immigrants to Canada (CIC, Integration Branch)
- Minority Students' Postsecondary Experiences in Ontario Colleges and Universities
- Characteristics of a Welcoming Community (CIC, Integration Branch)

Projects Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ontario Region

- WCI Action-Research on the Local Immigration Partnership Councils (LIPs)
- Opinion Leader Interviews: Views on Cultural Diversity and Immigration
- Antiracism and Antidiscrimination Observatory
- Policing Newcomers: Policy, Training and Practice
- Perceptions of Discrimination in Health Services Experienced by Immigrant Minorities in Ontario
- Barriers to Health Service Utilization by Immigrant Families Raising a Disabled Child

- Organizational Best Practices for the Local Immigration Partnership Councils (LIPs)
- Sectoral Best Practices and Cross-Sectoral Best Practices for the Local Immigration Partnership Councils (LIPs)
- Assessment and Learning-Dissemination Tool for the Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs)
- Tools to Assess Indicators of a Welcoming Community