

Bathurst-Finch Local Immigration Partnership



# Bathurst Finch Settlement and Employment Strategy and Action Plan

April 2011



Helping immigrants settle and integrate into Canadian society is an important process and requires the collaboration of all sectors in our communities. To promote this essential collaboration, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) has funded Local Immigration Partnerships in communities across Ontario.

## Local Immigration Partnership

Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP) seek to strengthen the role of communities in serving and integrating immigrants by bringing local stakeholders such as residents, the City, the provincial government, schools, community agencies, and grassroots groups to the planning table. LIP provides a collaborative framework for, and facilitates the development and implementation of, sustainable local solutions for the successful integration of immigrants in the province. LIP puts immigration on the local planning agenda, and helps communities reap the social and economic benefits of successful immigrant integration.

LIP is a community planning exercise that provides opportunities for both newcomers and the community receiving them, to work together to identify barriers, develop policies, and implement programs that will facilitate immigrant settlement and integration. The Bathurst-Finch LIP began on October 1st, 2009. The initial 'planning phase' has led to the establishment of a Partnership Council, known as the LIP Council, and the development of a Settlement & Employment Strategy and accompanying Action Plan.

**At the time of publication, members of the Bathurst-Finch Local Immigration Partnership are:**

### Organizations

- Toronto Employment and Social Services
- City of Toronto Social Development
- JVS Toronto
- Kababayan Community Centre
- Humber College
- CUIAS Immigrant Services
- North York Community House
- North York Women's Centre
- Toronto Public Library
- YMCA Newcomer Information Centre
- Toronto Public Health
- YMCA Korean Community Services
- Unison Community Health Centre
- Alternative Youth Centre for Employment (AYCE)
- JIAS (Jewish Immigrant Aid Services) Toronto
- Griffin Centre
- Welcome House

### Residents

- Maureen Simpson
- Natalia Pivovarov
- Nina Vorobyeva
- Oleg Morgunov

## Objectives

LIP objectives are to:

- » support community planning on the topic of immigrant settlement and integration;
- » increase awareness about issues faced by immigrants in the community;
- » encourage inclusive community engagement opportunities;
- » support the coordination efforts of community service providers in the community;
- » further build the capacity and support the sustainability of the community network.

# The Bathurst-Finch Community



Bathurst-Finch (also known by its civic name Westminster-Branson) is one of Toronto's northernmost neighbourhoods. It is bounded by Steeles Avenue West to the north, Bathurst Street to the east, and follows the boundaries of the Don River from the west to the south-east.

The neighbourhood struggles with poor access to services, isolation, and lower socio-economic indicators when compared to the larger City of Toronto. In 2005, Bathurst-Finch residents had an average after-tax household income of \$49,440, compared to the City of Toronto at \$63,870. The incidence of low income after-tax in Bathurst-Finch is 24.9%, again compared to Toronto at 19.4%.

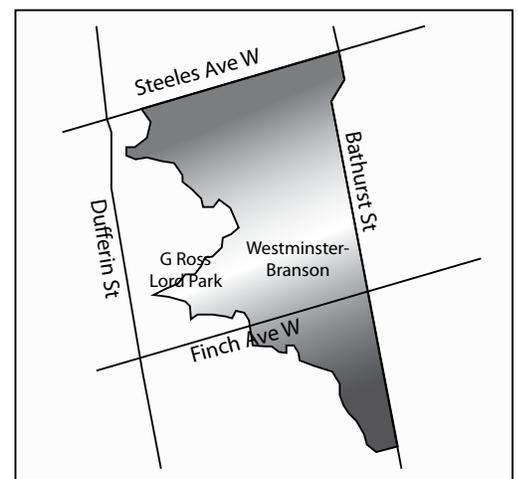
According to the 2006 Canada Census, Bathurst-Finch has a very large immigrant population with over 70% residents being foreign-born. More than 33% of those immigrants arrived in Canada between 2001 and 2006. 31% of residents identify themselves as being of Jewish ethnic origin, and 23% of Russian origin. Other top ethnic origin groups include Filipino (9%), Ukrainian (8%), and Polish (6%). The top native languages besides English are: Russian (32%), Tagalog (6%), Korean (4%), Hebrew (3%), and Persian (2%). The largest visible minority group in Bathurst-Finch is Filipino.

In 2004, the United Way, in a joint initiative with the City of Toronto, formed the Strong Neighbourhood Task Force, with the goal of building an action plan for revitalizing Toronto neighbourhoods. In 2005, the task force released a report, *Strong Neighbourhoods: A Call to Action*, analyzing Toronto's 140 neighbourhoods.

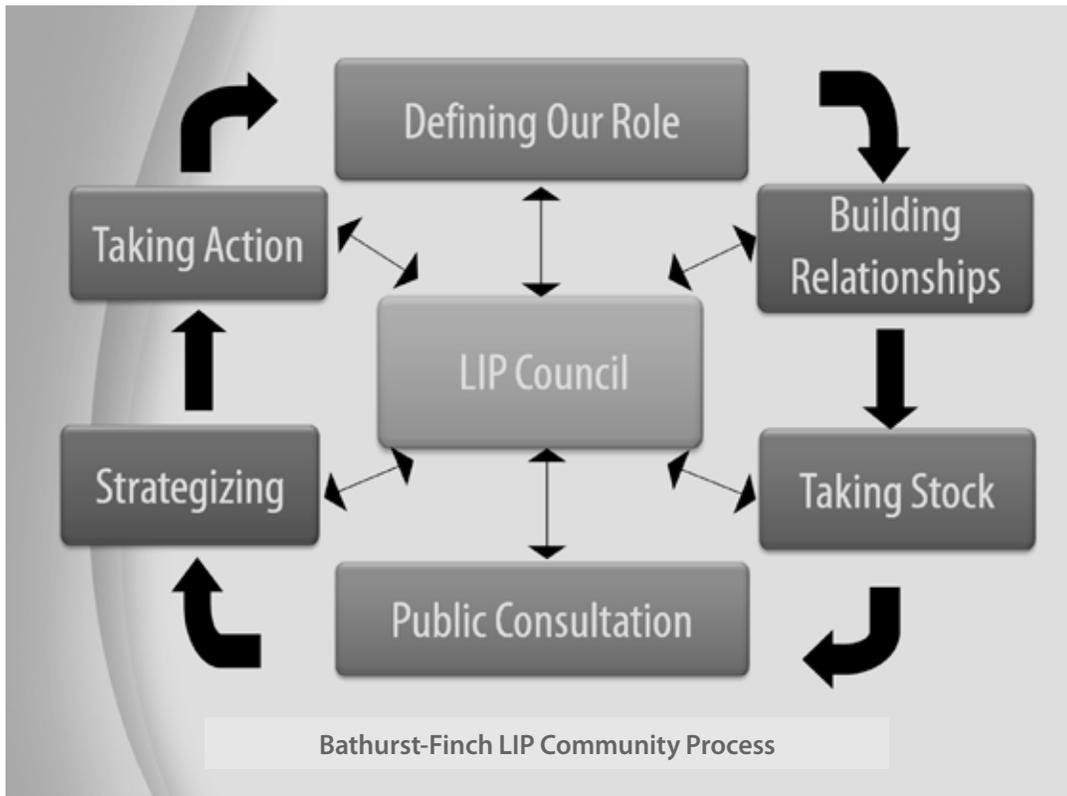
The objective was to identify those neighbourhoods where public investment in local services has not kept pace with demographic shifts, population

increases, and growing social needs. The analysis measured services, facilities, challenges, and the vitality of each neighbourhood.

Through the task force analysis, Bathurst-Finch was identified as a priority neighbourhood with poor access to services, facing significant challenges, and in need of social and physical infrastructure investment. The Local Immigration Partnership seeks to participate in that investment process.



# LIP and Community Development



Community development is a social process that increases and enhances community resources. It is an opportunity for community stakeholders to gain control over externally imposed conditions so that the local population can respond collectively to events and issues that affect them. It is about collective problem-solving, self-help, and empowerment.

Specifically, LIP process is a community planning exercise. It is a strategy-building process that addresses the needs of the community in regards to immigrant settlement and employment, using community input and involvement. Following this process, the Bathurst-Finch LIP has delivered a community-based immigrant settlement and employment strategy, documented here. It has also delivered an accompanying action plan that serves as a roadmap for ongoing community planning and resource enhancement.

## Public Consultations

As a part of its public consultations, LIP conducted focus groups, interviews, surveys and community cafés in order to learn about the values, interests, and beliefs of newcomers living in Bathurst-Finch. Consultations with residents, businesses, grassroots groups, and community service providers have highlighted key issues in immigrant settlement; the challenges they face; and the existing resources and supports the community provides.

## Grassroots

**Groups** includes neighbourhood groups; self-help groups; local political campaign efforts; cooperatives; ethno-cultural, educational, recreational, and issue-oriented groups; most networks; many local chapters of service clubs; and many religious groups based on the activities of the congregation's members

# LIP Settlement and Employment Strategy



A strategy is an overall approach and plan to a particular end. LIP has used a community planning process to develop the immigrant settlement and employment strategy for Bathurst-Finch. A strategy provides clarity about desired goals and allows for a decision-making process that identifies how best to achieve them. Instead of 'goals', the LIP strategy identifies 'strategic directions' to accommodate the need to re-adjust goals through an ongoing process of taking stock and identifying stakeholders and possible actions.

## **The strategic directions identified in the LIP strategy fall under four priority areas:**

- 1 Information, Referral, & Services for Immigrants***
- 2 English Language***
- 3 Employment & Training***
- 4 Health & Wellbeing***

For each strategic direction, needed actions have been identified that will lead LIP Council towards achieving its goals.

# Information, Referral, & Services for Immigrants



Immigrants need balanced and accurate information about the benefits and challenges of immigration and integration in Canada so that they can make an informed decision about their settlement processes. Information should be specific, tailored, practical, and should come from official sources. Printed materials are not enough, as there is a need to accompany this information with personal guidance from a case worker, mentor, or other trusted sources of support in the receiving community.

Challenges arising from ineffective orientation and information can be understood in terms of quantity and quality. Generally, there is too much information, but not enough information delivered through the right channels, in the right formats, or on the right subjects.

# Information, Referral, & Services for Immigrants

**Case Management** is a client-driven process that seeks to provide quality care and support services through the effective and efficient use of resources. In scenarios where clients are seeking support in complex social, systems and fiscal environments, case management needs to be collaborative in order to effectively support the clients' achievement of safe, realistic and reasonable goals.

**A Community Animator** is an important component of most community development processes. An animator has a breadth of local knowledge and community connections that help facilitate interaction between agencies and residents.

## Strategic Direction 1.1: Build a culture of information exchange and coordination among service providers and community agencies to improve settlement services for immigrants

### Actions Needed:

- 1.1.1 Support community planning tables that provide opportunities for stakeholders to exchange information, dialogue, and coordinate services and programs.
- 1.1.2 Develop and maintain a current and up-to-date database of community information, services, programs, and events that is accessible to all service providers and community agencies.
- 1.1.3 Hold professional development events for service providers and community agency staff to exchange ideas, receive training, review best practices, and keep up-to-date about services and the community.
- 1.1.4 Explore better systems of case management for settlement services, both internally and inter-organizationally, so clients can be better tracked through referral processes and follow-up can be better facilitated.
- 1.1.5 Advocate to funders to include reporting not just on quantitative outcomes (e.g. number of clients served, quotas), but also qualitative outcomes (e.g. strengthened partnerships, resources shared, in-kind contributions, etc.) in their evaluation frameworks.

## Strategic Direction 1.2: Improve access to information, services, and programs for immigrants and other residents

### Actions Needed:

- 1.2.1 Develop partnerships with schools, libraries, medical clinics, and other community institutions to connect, inform, and mobilize residents about community services, programs, and events.
- 1.2.2 Communicate with grassroots organizations, faith-based groups, and other immigrant social networks to inform and direct residents to relevant community services and programs.
- 1.2.3 Make use of ethno-cultural newspapers and other community publications to reach out to residents.
- 1.2.4 Support the development of an online neighbourhood portal/website that provides up-to-date information services, programs, and events to newcomers and other residents.
- 1.2.5 Seek out collaborative funding for permanent Community Animators to help agencies reach out, inform, and mobilize residents.

## Strategic Direction 1.3: Enhance participatory processes in the development, delivery, and evaluation of settlement services and programs

### Actions Needed:

- 1.3.1 Conduct regular needs assessments in Bathurst-Finch to determine the needs and wants of the community.
- 1.3.2 Develop a participatory toolkit for community agencies that suggests guidelines and resources that encourage more opportunities for residents and other community members to participate in the development, delivery, and evaluation of services and programs.

# English Language



Obtaining functional language skills is a top priority for nearly all immigrants. Immigrants need better assessment of language skills and better organization of classes so that curriculum can be targeted to specific skill levels and employment needs. There is also a need to provide additional occupation-specific training; and include lessons around Canadian idioms, customs and other idiosyncrasies of Canadian culture and language.

Language learning can also be more difficult among certain sub-populations, such as Canadian citizens, refugee claimants, and non-status immigrants who are not eligible for LINC. Others who find it difficult to access language services are seniors who find it difficult to travel to class; caregivers and parents who require time off work and/or childcare; and youth under the age of 18 years who would benefit from classes after school or co-located with their school, as well as during the summer.

**Youth under the age of 18** are not eligible for LINC, ESL, or ESL Literacy classes. There is an assumption that immigrant youth receive adequate English language learning in regular school.

**LINC or Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada** is a free language training program funded federally by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). LINC is offered by a third-party such as a community agency or other institution. Participants must be newcomers over the age of 18; landed immigrants, convention refugees or holders of ministerial permits. Refugee claimants and Canadian citizens are ineligible for LINC.

# English Language

**ESL or English a Second Language** is a free language training program funded provincially by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI). Typically ESL programming is offered by the Toronto District School Board (TDBS) and generally is open to all newcomers.

**ESL Literacy** is a program, funded provincially by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI), for individuals who are learning English as a Second Language and who are not functionally literate in their own language for a variety of reasons.

**ELT or Enhanced Language Training / OSLT or Occupation Specific Language Training** provides free job-specific language training in English but also the workplace culture skills required to communicate effectively in the Canadian workplace. There are also opportunities for mentoring, job placements and other ways to help newcomers find work. This program is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). Participants must have a background in a specific occupation and a higher level of English competency.

**Conversation Circles** are informal conversation groups where new immigrants come together to practice their English in informal settings. Many are volunteer-based.

## Strategic Direction 2.1: Remove barriers to English language learning opportunities for immigrants, particularly youth (aged 12 to 18), parents/caregivers, and seniors.

### Actions Needed:

- 2.1.1 Advocate to broaden client eligibility requirements of government-funded language classes (LINC, ESL, ESL Literacy) so that they do not exclude residents based on immigration status.
- 2.1.2 Provide recreation and leisure programs for newcomer youth that integrates English language learning and conversation practice, after school and during the summer.
- 2.1.3 Provide day programs for newcomer seniors that integrates English language learning and conversation practice with recreational and leisure activities.
- 2.1.4 Provide family-based English classes for caregivers (including parents, nannies, grandparents, etc...), where the child remains with the caregiver.
- 2.1.5 Provide childcare for parents and caregivers attending ESL, LINC, and other English language learning courses.
- 2.1.6 Increase online English learning opportunities, such as LINC Home Study, and online conversation circle chat-rooms available to Bathurst-Finch residents.

## Strategic Direction 2.2: Improve the coordination and access of English language learning opportunities for immigrants.

### Actions Needed:

- 2.2.1 Create a regular forum for language service providers to meet, plan, exchange ideas, and collaborate on English language learning opportunities.
- 2.2.2 Diversify English language classes' scheduling to provide a selection of full-time, part-time, daytime, evening, weekday, and weekend courses.
- 2.2.3 Explore the capacity and skills of English language teachers to provide different skill levels of English lessons, specialized classes (e.g. professional writing, grammar), and occupation-specific language training.
- 2.2.4 Advocate for a more comprehensive language assessment process that measures not only skill level, but also charts a pathway to achieving the client's language learning goals (e.g. a language action plan).
- 2.2.5 Support the organization and development of student representation (e.g. LINC/ESL learners associations).

## Strategic Direction 2.3: Help newcomers overcome English language barriers to attaining gainful employment and upward mobility in the labour market.

### Actions Needed:

- 2.3.1 Increase the number of job-specific language learning programs (e.g. ELT, OSLT, and SLT), making them more geographically accessible in Bathurst-Finch, and target professions in-demand in the immigrant labour force.
- 2.3.2 Develop and run conversation circles for specific professions (e.g. conversation circle for internationally-trained nurses).
- 2.3.3 Increase opportunities for residents to practice advanced conversational English, pronunciation, and writing – beyond Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) level 8.
- 2.3.4 Explore opportunities to partner with the private sector and provide English language training in the workplace.

# Employment & Training



Employment is the biggest priority for nearly all immigrants. Particularly, economic immigrants are looking for good jobs that match their education, skills, and experience. Poor employment outcomes can be related to three barriers: (1) obtaining equivalencies for foreign education or certification; (2) obtaining recognition of foreign work experience; (3) and obtaining references for work.

Credential recognition is a primary concern for nearly all economic class immigrants. Unemployment, underemployment and difficulties obtaining professional work are causing depression, boredom, isolation and cynicism. Volunteering, although valued by immigrants, is not always a good fit for their profession or is not financially sustainable.

**SLT or Specialized Language Training** is a pilot project offering immigrants the opportunity to strengthen their language skills so they gain employment that reflect their qualifications or function more effectively in the job they already have. The program is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI).

**An Internationally-trained Individual (ITI)** is any immigrant who has completed post-secondary education and/or training, either professional or in the skilled trades, outside of Canada.

# Employment & Training

**Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS)** provides employment services to all Toronto residents. They also provide financial benefits and supports such as Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).

**The Labour Force** is the people in the labour market who are the suppliers of labour. It includes all those people who are employed or unemployed but seeking employment.

**Bridge Training Programs** are courses that help ITIs establish themselves in their profession by offering opportunities to become licensed, gain on the job experience and connect with mentors. They are run by employers, colleges and universities, occupational regulatory bodies, and community organizations.

## Strategic Direction 3.1: Enhance employment services to be more responsive to the skills, education, and needs of immigrant job seekers.

### Actions Needed:

- 3.1.1 Conduct research about the labour force (skills, education, experience, career goals) living in Bathurst-Finch.
- 3.1.2 Provide internationally-trained immigrants (ITIs) with better access to industry/sector specific labour market information (i.e. labour trends, growing sectors, regulations, and occupations in high or low demand).
- 3.1.3 Increase childcare and transportation support (TTC Tokens) for clients accessing employment services.
- 3.1.4 Work to expand mentorship programs and other opportunities for ITIs to network and develop professional contacts.
- 3.1.5 Bring resources to Bathurst-Finch that support immigrant entrepreneurs or newcomers who want to start small businesses.

## Strategic Direction 3.2: Increase engagement with the private sector, including employers, unions, regulatory bodies, and professional associations.

### Actions Needed:

- 3.2.1 Raise awareness about not-for-profit employment agencies and the free services they can provide to the private sector.
- 3.2.2 Raise awareness about the talent and potential of the immigrant labour force and the benefits of hiring newcomers to the private sector.
- 3.2.3 Explore the challenges the private sector faces related to hiring and retaining immigrants and work to make employment services more responsive to their needs.
- 3.2.4 Identify private sector "champions" or best practices in immigrant mentoring, training, and/or hiring.
- 3.2.5 Explore promising practices in incentivizing employers to hire specific segments of the labour force (i.e. youth, newcomers, new graduates, etc...).

## Strategic Direction 3.3: Support the education and training needs of ITIs and other immigrants in Bathurst-Finch.

### Actions Needed:

- 3.3.1 Advocate for increased funding that will increase the availability and accessibility of bridge training programs and help ITIs fulfill upgrading and professional development requirements needed for the local labour market.
- 3.3.2 Advocate for the centralization and streamlining of foreign credential recognition services for ITIs by government at the provincial level.
- 3.3.3 Work to expand opportunities for paid internships, co-ops, and work placement so that ITIs can gain "Canadian work experience".
- 3.3.4 Strengthen partnership between settlement and employment service providers in order to address the needs of immigrants with little or no education, training, and/or work experience

# Health & Wellbeing



Immigrant health and wellbeing is an emerging and complex new issue. Some studies have found that global migration has become a significant factor that affects the health of communities. Other studies suggest that immigrants are healthier, at least in the short run, than the Canadian population - the so-called healthy immigrant effect - due to Canada's rigorous health requirements in order to qualify for immigration. However this effect tends to diminish over time, as immigrants settle into Canadian society.

A range of mental health services are required to help immigrants. In some cases, informal, one-on-one counseling is enough to help immigrants deal with issues such as culture shock and parenting issues. In other cases, professional psychological or psychiatric support is necessary (e.g. for refugees who have experienced trauma or immigrants experiencing violence and abuse). Loneliness and depression resulting from social isolation (and the immigration experience more generally) were also mentioned by many immigrants. They underlined the need for additional or new opportunities for social interaction among immigrants, and with Canadians, in order to foster new social networks, share immigration experiences, exchange advice, or simply for relaxation and fun. For youth and working parents, additional organized and free (or very low cost) after school programs are needed.

**The Private Sector** is the part of the economy which is both run for-profit and not controlled by the government. By contrast, enterprises that are part of the government are part of the public sector, and private non-profit organizations are part of the voluntary sector or not-for-profit sector.

# Health & Wellbeing

**Anti-Oppression** work recognizes that oppression based on race, ethnicity, creed, class, gender, sexual orientation, gender orientation, immigration status, country of origin, religion, mental health status, age, and ability are systemic in Canadian society. These form a system of interlocking oppressions that are mutually enforcing and cannot be addressed in isolation. Therefore, the struggle against racism should be integrated with the struggles against other forms of oppression. Any struggle against oppression must be informed by an anti-racist framework.

**A Non-Status Immigrant** refers to people who have made their home in Canada but lack legal immigration status including failed refugee claimants, immigrants who have experienced sponsorship breakdown, and individuals whose temporary worker, student or visitor visas have expired.

## Strategic Direction 4.1: Foster and support a welcoming environment for newcomers and other residents

### Actions Needed:

- 4.1.1 Provide financial and/or in-kind support to community events that encourage civic engagement, inclusivity, diversity, and learning about other cultures.
- 4.1.2 Offer anti-racism and anti-oppression training to service providers, teachers, community agencies, and grassroots groups.
- 4.1.3 Build awareness in the community about the diversity of the neighbourhood, and about the “immigrant experience” in the city.

## Strategic Direction 4.2: Use art, music, recreation, and food to bring people together, build community connections, and fight social isolation

### Actions Needed:

- 4.2.1 Encourage the use of creative mediums in settlement services (e.g. digital and oral storytelling, art exhibits, etc...) to help newcomers feel safe, build confidence, and overcome barriers to social integration.
- 4.2.2 Advocate for Antibes Community Centre to become a City of Toronto priority community centre that offers free, year-round sports and recreation programs for residents

## Strategic Direction 4.3: Support the physical and mental health of immigrants and other residents

### Actions Needed:

- 4.3.1 Advocate for the elimination of the three month waiting period for newcomers to be eligible for the Ontario Health Insurance Program (OHIP).
- 4.3.2 Develop partnerships between settlement and information service providers and the healthcare sector, reaching out to doctors, hospitals, dentists, pharmacies, and the community health centre.
- 4.3.3 Create a community-wide emergency translation service through a phone-based volunteer system.
- 4.3.4 Advocate for increased access to health care for non-status immigrants and refugee claimants.
- 4.3.5 Build the capacity of settlement workers to provide mental and emotional health information and referrals to their clients.
- 4.3.6 Partner with residents and grassroots groups to develop culturally competent and community-based orientation and information material on mental and emotional health.



The Bathurst-Finch Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) is one of 17 multi-stakeholder, community-based planning tables in Toronto. LIP enhances the settlement success of newcomers through collaborative research, planning and engagement



Get involved in building an even more welcoming Bathurst-Finch community:

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LIP lead agency



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