

# The Immigration Strategy & Action Plan



Hamilton Immigration  
Partnership Council

# Table of Contents

## I. THE IMMIGRATION STRATEGY

- Introduction** ..... 4
- The Immigration Strategy Overview** ..... 6
- Strategic Priorities** ..... 8
  - Building Collective and Collaborative Leadership ..... 8
    - Declaration of Intent ..... 9
  - Strengthening the Delivery of Settlement Services ..... 10
  - Creating a Welcoming Community ..... 11
  - Creating and Disseminating Knowledge of Immigration ..... 11
- Action Plan** ..... 12

## II. THE IMMIGRATION STRATEGY: ACTION PLAN

- Introduction** ..... 14
- Strategic Priorities** ..... 14
  - Building Collective and Collaborative Leadership ..... 14
  - Strengthening the Delivery of Settlement Services ..... 16
  - Creating a Welcoming Community ..... 18
  - Creating and Disseminating Knowledge of Immigration ..... 19

## I. THE IMMIGRATION STRATEGY

### Introduction

For many reasons, Hamilton needs to take a proactive approach to immigration. Population growth is stalled, our labour force is aging, newcomers trying to access the labour market are faced with unnecessary barriers and too many of them are living in poverty.

Many immigrants to Hamilton are highly educated with job-specific skills and entrepreneurial talents - the very ingredients that are essential for Hamilton to compete and prosper in the knowledge-based, global economy.

The Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council has been established to respond to these challenges. This community collaborative consists of leaders representing key organizations and sectors in Hamilton, and has been tasked with drawing up and implementing a made-in-Hamilton Immigration Strategy and Action Plan to address the issues surrounding immigration for the betterment of the city as a whole.

To guide its work, the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council has articulated the following vision.

#### **The Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council Vision**

***Hamilton is an inclusive community where the talents and experience that immigrants and refugees bring are valued because they are integral to making Hamilton the best place to raise a child.***

Based on the numerous community consultations and research undertaken, the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council has identified four strategic priorities for Hamilton in pursuit of this vision:

1. Building collective and collaborative leadership in pursuit of Hamilton's immigration vision
2. Strengthening the delivery of immigrant and refugee settlement services
3. Creating a welcoming community and thereby the conditions that encourage immigrants to both settle and stay in Hamilton
4. Creating and disseminating foundational knowledge of immigration and immigrants in Hamilton

The Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council is calling on all Hamiltonians - as residents and as members of voluntary, private or public organizations - to endorse, support and commit to this Immigration Strategy. This collective support is necessary to strengthen Hamilton's identity as an immigrant-friendly and welcoming city.

The Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council will continue to drive this Immigration Strategy forward by championing with various community partners and stakeholders to determine ownership of the Immigration Strategy and the actions they must take to incorporate it into their particular contexts.

This Immigration Strategy can only be achieved through a collective commitment by all residents in all our different roles and capacities, working together toward the goal of Hamilton as a welcoming, inclusive community.

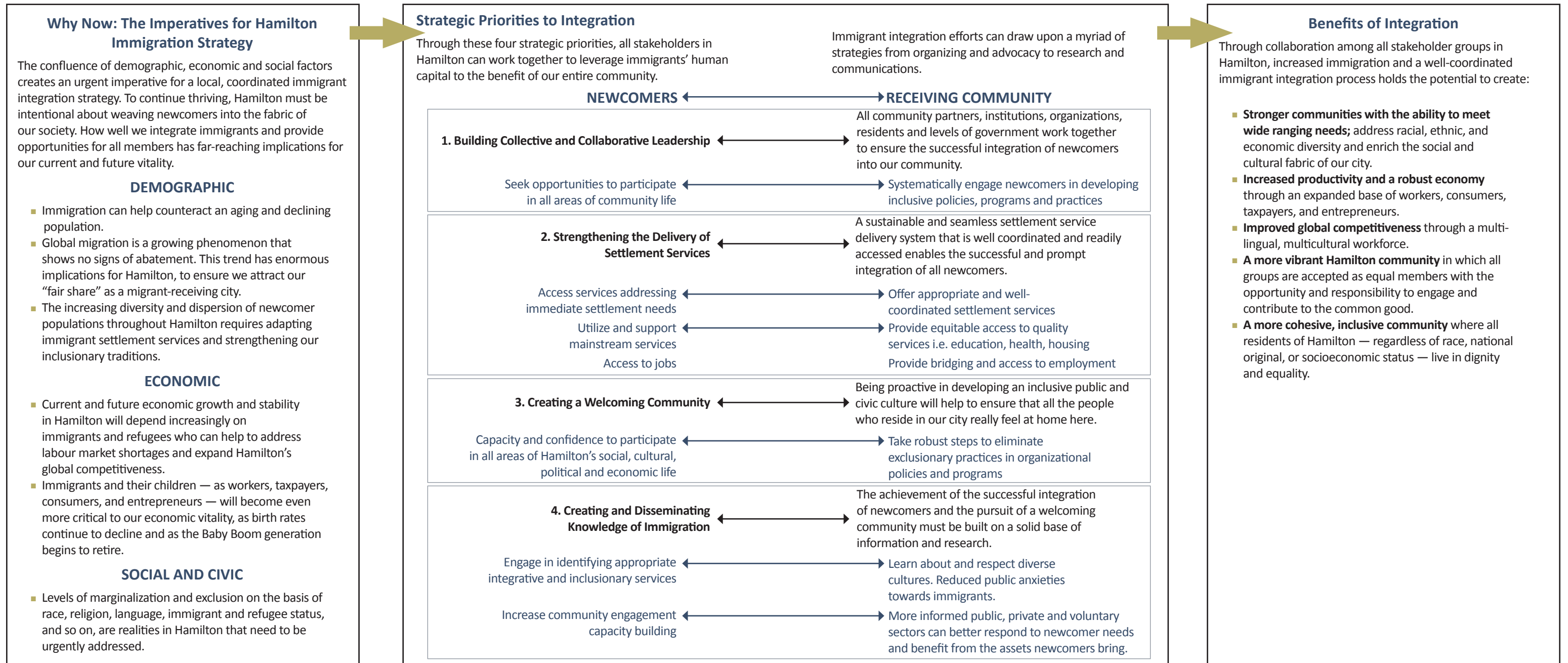


***The Immigration Strategy ensures a welcoming community for all newcomers.***

# The Immigration Strategy Overview

The following chart briefly summarizes the made-in-Hamilton Immigration Strategy and identifies the needs and drivers for this Strategy. In responding to these imperatives, the middle column identifies the four strategic priorities which recognize that settlement and integration is a two-way process involving responsibilities on the part of both the newcomer and Hamilton as the host society. The remaining column identifies some of the potential benefits and outcome measures of successfully implementing these four strategic priorities.

The pursuit of the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council’s vision recognizes that immigrant integration is a dynamic two-way process in which newcomers and the receiving society of Hamilton work together to build a secure, vibrant and cohesive community. Achieving this vision requires an intentional effort that must engage all members of Hamilton’s community. Mutual responsibility, multi-sector involvement, and a multi-strategy approach are the cornerstones of the Immigration Strategy.



## Strategic Priorities

### ► *What is the road map in pursuit of the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council's vision?*

The behaviours of the host society in providing a welcoming environment are fundamental to the successful settlement of immigrants and refugees to Hamilton and the notion of integration and an inclusive community. This is confirmed by international research that indicates the level of involvement and understanding by the receiving society is the most important factor and has the greatest impact on immigrant integration (Public Policy Forum, Ottawa, 2008).

The four theme areas - corroborating the international research - have been identified by the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council as the strategic priorities by which we in Hamilton can support the successful settlement of immigrants and refugees to our city:

1. Building collective and collaborative leadership in pursuit of Hamilton's immigration vision
2. Strengthening the delivery of immigrant and refugee settlement services
3. Creating a welcoming community and thereby the conditions that encourage immigrants to both settle and stay in Hamilton
4. Creating and disseminating foundational knowledge of immigration and immigrants in Hamilton

### **Priority: Building Collective and Collaborative Leadership**

*All community partners, institutions, organizations, residents and levels of government must work together to ensure the successful integration of newcomers into our community.*

To more fully embrace and realize the enormous social, cultural and economic assets that immigrants offer and that already exist within our extraordinarily diverse city, significant changes must be made to our civic, cultural and organization practices.

The Immigration Strategy is a guidance document that encourages all sectors in Hamilton to recognize the importance of immigration and to consider how each can demonstrate their particular leadership roles in facilitating a more inclusive and welcoming community.

The issues of immigration have an impact on all areas of life in Hamilton. To have legitimacy, significance and impact, this made-in-Hamilton Immigration Strategy requires community ownership and buy-in. The involvement of the residents of the city

is essential along with the active involvement and participation of the major organizational and institutional sectors in Hamilton.

By articulating this collective commitment and leadership, the Immigration Strategy seeks the formal support and endorsement of key stakeholder organizations throughout Greater Hamilton. This formal support is secured through obtaining signatures to the Declaration of Intent that follows.



### **THE IMMIGRATION STRATEGY** *Declaration of Intent*

In a city that is increasingly diverse in the makeup of its people, and functioning in an increasingly global age, immigration and the integration of immigrants and refugees is a key determinant of the future success and prosperity of Hamilton.

Consistent with the vision of the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council we, the undersigned do hereby endorse the priorities and actions set out in the Immigration Strategy. This strategic framework enables us to manage and influence the impact of immigration for the benefit of all the residents of Hamilton.

We will continue to facilitate, cooperate and collaborate in measures, actions and policies which will effectively contribute to the concept of Hamilton as an open, welcoming and inclusive city.

Furthermore, we as stakeholders in the economic, social and cultural life of Hamilton undertake to continue to take a proactive and robust approach in integrating immigrant settlement issues and a diversity and inclusive dimension in all our strategic planning and business processes and encourage those with whom we work to do the same.

#### **Signature**

Name  
Position

Corporate Logo



Current signatories include:

*Mayor and City Councillors*

*Mohawk College President*

*YMCA President & CEO*

*Hamilton International Airport President & CEO*

*Hamilton Chamber of Commerce CEO*

*Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion Executive Director*

*The Hamilton Wentworth District School Board Director of Education*

## Priority: Strengthening the Delivery of Settlement Services

*A sustainable and seamless settlement service delivery system that is well-coordinated and readily accessed enables the successful and prompt integration of all newcomers.*

Hamilton can be proud of a long and well-established settlement service delivery system. Still, there are a number of barriers that prevent newcomers to the city from being integrated efficiently:

### Settlement is Taking Longer:

In the past twenty years, the levels of unemployment, income and poverty among recent newcomers to Hamilton indicate that the settlement period for immigrants - in terms of their economic outcomes converging with those of the native-born population - has practically doubled to more than ten years. Consequently, the backlog of unsettled and un-serviced newcomer clientele in the city's settlement agencies continue to balloon.

### Barriers to Integration:

The barriers to settlement for immigrants and refugees in Hamilton have been well-documented and continue to persist. These barriers have generally been grouped into the following main areas:

- Immigration process (e.g., there is a 5 to 6 year waiting period for people to enter Canada and an estimated 1 million people waiting)
- Employment (e.g. lack of Canadian experience, insufficient recognition of credentials earned outside of Canada, etc.)
- Initial settlement process
- Language education (e.g. eligibility criteria for accessing language training)
- Access to addressing health needs
- Access to affordable housing

### The Role of the Settlement Sector:

Historically, publicly-funded settlement services have provided specifically defined services to individual newcomers and they also have performed other critical functions including research, public education, advocacy and community development.

Due to the current economic climate and funding restrictions, there is a danger that these broader critical functions to effective settlement and the provision of more individualized services might be lost.

All community partners must work together to address the pressures faced by the settlement sector along with gaps in service provision to create a more responsive and integrated service provision system.

It is also important to distinguish between formal settlement services and more informal associations/voluntary groups in Hamilton that are accessed by immigrants and refugees to help manage their transition. Informal networking activities initiated by immigrants (available and accessible through their ethno-cultural associations) meet both instrumental and expressive needs. Faith-based institutions are particularly important in this regard.

It is necessary to identify, acknowledge and support the informal and voluntary settlement sectors for their important role in the integration of newcomers. A well-coordinated system of settlement services that ensures effective integration of all newcomers will require the creation of strong linkages between formal and informal settlement services.

## Priority: Creating a Welcoming Community

*Being proactive in developing an inclusive public and civic culture will help to ensure that all people who reside in our city really feel at home here.*

Private and public partnerships need to be established in order to implement a number of public education programs that support a climate where all immigrants and refugees to Hamilton feel welcomed and are able to participate in all aspects of civic life. Constructive discussion about immigration needs to be brought in from the margins to the mainstream of Hamilton life.

A welcoming community is one in which anxieties, misconceptions, discrimination, exclusionary practices and hate activity with regard to immigration is uncommon. Instead, the contributions and achievements of immigrants are promoted, diversity is encouraged and celebrated, inclusion is regularly practiced, community cohesion is evident and there is meaningful interaction between newcomers and the settled community.

## Priority: Creating and Disseminating Knowledge of Immigration

*The achievement of the successful integration of newcomers and the pursuit of a welcoming community must be built on a solid base of information and research.*

The lack of information and intelligence and the lack of widely sharing that information is part of the reason for the absence of coordination and the ad-hoc and crisis reaction stance to too many settlement and integration activities. This lack of shared knowledge also contributes to a heightened level of ambivalence and uncertainty among residents about the impacts of immigration on their community.

Building foundational knowledge and data is crucial to achieving the outcomes of this local immigration strategy because:

- Service providers and employers who have access to the most recent immigrant research and data and are more aware of immigrants' needs and values will be less inclined to engage in exclusionary practices, allowing greater access.
- Strengthening awareness and capacity to integrate immigrants is best achieved through a sharpened narrative and a more informed body of knowledge about immigration, particularly on the longer-term effects on Hamilton.
- The first step toward planning and coordinating settlement services is to ensure that local stakeholders are fully aware of the issues, impact and importance of immigration so that they are well-informed and well-equipped to plan and deliver quality services that meet the specific needs of all immigrants to Hamilton.
- The provision of enhanced information/intelligence on immigration and immigrants in Hamilton will improve due diligence in promoting relevant high-quality settlement and integration services in Hamilton and facilitate effective monitoring and oversight.

## Action Plan

The Action Plan that follows outlines some of the major goals and corresponding strategic actions necessary to implement each of the four priorities outlined in the Immigration Strategy. This is the starting point for more detail to be developed by community partners who will create actions specific to their own institutions and organizations.

The implementation of the Immigration Strategy requires multi-dimensional cooperation and collaboration among and within all of the community's institutions, organizations, private sector and not-for-profit groups.

This Strategy also requires implementation of the four strategic priorities at different levels of the community including individual, neighbourhood, organization and city wide.



*We are all key determinants in helping newcomers feel welcome.*

### The Individual Level:

All individuals are responsible for doing their part in dispelling the myths and misconceptions of immigration to become more accepting and tolerant. This positive practice will lead to a more welcoming community for newcomers. Individual immigrants are also responsible for becoming integrated into the host society by:

- Seeking opportunities to participate actively in all areas of community life
- Accessing services that address immediate settlement needs
- Utilizing and supporting mainstream services
- Actively seeking employment
- Building the capacity and confidence to participate in all areas of Hamilton's social, cultural, political and economic life
- Engaging in identifying appropriate integrative and inclusive services

### The Community/Neighbourhood Level:

Newcomers emigrate to Canada but they settle and integrate into local communities and neighbourhoods. The friendliness of neighbours and the quality of interactions in the neighbourhoods of our city are key determinants for newcomers in feeling that they "belong" in their locality. It is in the neighbourhoods of Hamilton where a sense of belonging and feeling welcome is articulated and negotiated. It is the quality of the relationships made at the local, neighbourhood level that can bind diverse communities.

### The Organizational Level:

While settlement services in Hamilton are focused primarily on the immediate, short-term transitional settlement needs of immigrants and refugees, it is the institutional sectors — whether it is education, human services, health or employment services — that play a critical role in the medium and long-term settlement and integration process. This reality reinforces the point that immigration is everybody's business, and that the settlement and integration process cannot be left to the settlement service providers in Hamilton alone.

### The City-Wide Level:

The Immigration Strategy also requires action at a city-wide level. Only when the public as a whole realizes and accepts the value of immigration to Hamilton's social, cultural and economic life will immigrants be completely integrated and fully involved in the community and experience a true sense of belonging. Creating a cohesive community and a civic identity through the inclusive behaviours and practices of the host city benefits all of its residents.

## II. THE IMMIGRATION STRATEGY: ACTION PLAN

### Introduction

This Action Plan provides a framework for implementing the strategic priorities identified in the Immigration Strategy. It is organized by the goals and major strategic actions necessary to achieve each of the Strategy's four priorities. More detailed strategic actions are to be created by community partners including the municipal government, community institutions and organizations, both profit and not-for-profit, as well as community-based groups.

The implementation of this Action Plan will be carried out collectively and collaboratively by all community partners at all levels of the community with support from the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council.

Partners can use this Action Plan to indicate what specific activities they are currently undertaking as well as the expected time line for implementing these activities to achieve each goal.

#### Priority: Building Collective and Collaborative Leadership

*All community partners, institutions, organizations, residents and levels of government work together to ensure the successful integration of newcomers into our community.*

Goals	Strategic Actions	Activities	Timeline
1. Formal community support and endorsement of the Immigration Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtain signatories to the Declaration of Intent (see the Immigration Strategy).</li> </ul>		
2. All sectors in Hamilton work toward the same vision and goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serve and provide direction and oversight as a standard bearer for immigration issues in Hamilton.</li> <li>Actively promote the development of policies, protocols and structures that will embed best practices regarding settlement services in the public institutions of Hamilton.</li> <li>Review performance data on settlement and integration and make recommendations to support policy and/or operational initiatives.</li> </ul>		

Goals	Strategic Actions	Activities	Timeline
3. Each institution and organization in Hamilton will take the lead to ensure that immigration issues become a normal part of their everyday business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work toward integrating immigration in all strategic documents which may affect Hamilton's settlement and integration efforts</li> <li>Systematically engage newcomers in developing inclusive policies, programs and practices.</li> <li>Establish and implement an immigrant settlement policy and inclusionary strategy</li> <li>Undertake Inclusionary Impact Assessments for operational policies, procedures, processes and practices to ensure they do not exclude immigrants and refugees</li> <li>Develop strategies for leadership capacity building that ensures representation of all of Hamilton's diverse communities</li> <li>Identify barriers to employment and implement initiatives to remove barriers and improve representation of the workforce</li> <li>Provide equal access to purchasing requirements for all diverse businesses and encourage local diverse and immigrant-owned businesses to register on supplier lists</li> <li>Develop effective communications mechanisms to promote greater awareness of the importance of immigration at all levels of the organization, disseminate inclusive 'good practices' and support greater public access to data and services</li> <li>Implement ongoing diversity training</li> <li>Develop a community engagement strategy to include external outreach with diverse and newcomer communities</li> <li>Produce and disseminate Annual Inclusion Reports and establish other such reporting and accountability structures.</li> </ul>		
4. Closer collaboration and agreements among all three levels of government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommend that the municipal government lobby for a seat at the immigration policy table at the provincial and federal levels</li> <li>Create opportunities for real exchanges of information among the three levels of government</li> <li>Improve communication and collaboration among the municipal departments within the City of Hamilton</li> </ul>		



**Priority: Strengthening the Delivery of Settlement Services**

*A sustainable and seamless settlement service delivery system that is well-coordinated and readily accessed enables the successful and prompt integration of all newcomers.*

Goals	Strategic Actions	Activities	Timeline
5. A detailed analysis of the nature and role of all agencies in Hamilton involved with the provision of short and medium term settlement and integration support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Compile an inventory of Hamilton’s formal settlement services</li> <li>▪ Undertake an assessment of the informal services and voluntary networks that assist in settling newcomers in Hamilton</li> <li>▪ Identify programs and services that have particular impact and relevance to the settlement process</li> </ul>		
6. A fuller understanding of the settlement process in Hamilton as experienced by newcomers including the nature of newcomers’ needs and the barriers to successful integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Undertake ongoing consultations with newcomer communities</li> <li>▪ Partner with local and regional settlement research initiatives to access recent trends and issues</li> <li>▪ Collect the appropriate data to measure and assess whether fair and equitable services are provided to newcomers and publicly share this data to allow for public monitoring</li> <li>▪ Ensure the recognition and participation of immigrant and ethno-specific agencies in various areas of service planning and delivery</li> </ul>		
7. A well-coordinated and seamless settlement service system in Hamilton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify and address gaps in settlement service provision</li> <li>▪ Facilitate mechanisms for ongoing collaboration with local settlement agencies</li> <li>▪ Strengthen the linkages between the informal and formal settlement sector</li> </ul>		

Goals	Strategic Actions	Activities	Timeline
8. Increased awareness of and access to settlement services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide ongoing support to the Hamilton Immigration Portal and other online settlement and newcomer information systems</li> <li>▪ Develop and establish a Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council website with links to settlement services information</li> <li>▪ Publish and disseminate information on both the formal and informal settlement services in Hamilton</li> </ul>		
9. Recognition of and support for the informal and voluntary sectors in the provision of settlement services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consult with funding agencies to establish a funding stream that recognizes and gives support to the informal, voluntary sector and its critical role in the settlement and integration process</li> <li>▪ Recognize informal settlement services and develop complementary forms of collaboration and assistance</li> <li>▪ Disseminate information about formal settlement services to newcomers to these informal networks</li> </ul>		
10. Enhanced services such as language training, employment, housing, health and public transit to facilitate the settlement process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify policy and program improvements that reduce the barriers to efficient integration</li> <li>▪ Establish and expand such initiatives as internships, mentoring, job-shadowing and co-op placements to improve newcomer access to the labour market</li> <li>▪ Provide bridging access to employment</li> <li>▪ Identify and address newcomer needs to improve access to affordable and stable housing</li> <li>▪ Determine usage among newcomers to public transit and address concerns regarding cost, availability, etc.</li> <li>▪ Identify the differential healthcare needs of newcomers and develop appropriate responses for accessible and suitable healthcare provision</li> </ul>		

**Priority: Creating a Welcoming Community**

*Being proactive in developing an inclusive public and civic culture will help to ensure that all the people who reside in our city really feel at home.*

Goals	Strategic Actions	Activities	Timeline
11. Reduced public apprehension, anxieties and misconceptions about immigrants and immigration to Hamilton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop and implement a Public Education Strategy that highlights the contributions and achievements made by Hamilton’s diverse immigrant communities</li> <li>▪ Produce and widely disseminate information combating the myths and misconceptions about migrants and immigration</li> </ul>		
12. The elimination of racial discrimination, incidents of hate activity and the marginalization of residents because of their immigrant and refugee status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reconfirm through various public means and political platforms Hamilton’s commitment to the elimination and unacceptability of discrimination and exclusionary practices</li> </ul>		
13. Institutional practices that are inclusive and the elimination of barriers that exclude newcomers from participating in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify the best practices of Hamilton’s institutional sectors and promote the strategies that benefit from and celebrate Hamilton’s immigrant communities</li> <li>▪ Ensure all communications reflect and represent the diversity of Hamilton and are disseminated through a variety of channels, formats and languages</li> <li>▪ Establish proactive community engagement initiatives that seek and identify the needs and aspirations of newcomer communities</li> <li>▪ Involve newcomers in making decisions that affect their settlement experience in Hamilton and their participation in every aspect of life in the city</li> <li>▪ Take robust steps to eliminate exclusionary practices in organizational policies and programs</li> </ul>		
14. A cohesive community with an inclusive civic identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote mechanisms for meaningful interaction between newcomers and the resident community at the local neighbourhood level</li> <li>▪ Increase the capacity, skills and confidence of newcomers to participate in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the city</li> </ul>		

**Priority: Creating and Disseminating Knowledge of Immigration**

*The achievement of the successful integration of newcomers and the pursuit of a welcoming community must be built on a solid base of information and research.*

Goals	Strategic Actions	Activities	Timeline
15. An up-to-date, evidence-based body of information and intelligence to support well-coordinated settlement services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Commission, collect and review research in areas such as:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ immigration demographics</li> <li>→ inventory of settlement services provided in Hamilton</li> <li>→ informal settlement services</li> <li>→ gap analysis of settlement services</li> <li>→ newcomer needs</li> <li>→ immigration bibliography</li> <li>→ immigrants and the Hamilton economy</li> <li>→ institutional sectors and settlement issues</li> <li>→ specific immigrant population groups (e.g., youth, women, seniors, children, etc.; and diverse ethnicities and races)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
16. Knowledge about immigration in Hamilton is continually disseminated, promoted and utilized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop and disseminate both electronic and print versions of a variety of materials including a Newcomer Guide to Hamilton, fact sheets about immigration, newsletters, position papers, newspaper articles, etc.</li> <li>▪ Ensure service providers have access to the most recent research and data on immigrants to Hamilton to facilitate inclusive and equitable planning and delivery of services</li> <li>▪ Develop and provide information on settlement services in Hamilton:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Create an electronic directory of settlement services available in Hamilton in partnership with Inform Hamilton</li> <li>→ Support the Hamilton Immigration Portal and the development of other online settlement and newcomer information systems</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Develop a Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council website containing all research compiled as well as links to settlement services available</li> <li>▪ Learn about and respect diverse cultures to help reduce public anxieties towards immigrants and enable public and private sectors to better respond to immigrants’ needs while benefiting from the assets they bring to our community</li> </ul>		

*Hamilton is an inclusive community where the talents and experience that immigrants and refugees bring are valued because they are integral to making Hamilton the best place to raise a child.*

**The Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council**

[www.hamiltonimmigration.ca](http://www.hamiltonimmigration.ca)



Citizenship and  
Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et  
Immigration Canada