



## **What we heard report and recommended actions from All CLIP Meeting**

The following document is a summary and notes from the All-CLIP meeting and the supporting online engage portal. The notes are a themed summary of the table discussions and the online comments. Following the summary is a list of actions identified. These are grouped by CLIP priority for ease reading.

The in-person All CLIP meeting was on February 13, 2023. There were 54 attendees. The online portal was open from February 6 to February 24<sup>th</sup>. The online page was viewed 230 times by 72 unique visitors and received 72 total contributions.

### **Next steps**

This information will be shared with CLIP Council and the Immigrant Advisory Table on March 20, 2023, during a joint meeting where the group will discuss priorities and action items for 2023-2024.

The information will also be shared with all who attended.

### **What we heard – by CLIP priority**

#### **Community Life**

- Newcomers are unable to participate in and enjoy community life because they are feeling excluded and isolated instead of connected, especially after COVID-19.
- Children and Youth (12 -29), feel left out as they may not have the opportunity to engage in North American activities due to lack of financial and familiar support.
- Additional barriers to participation in community life include lack of trust between newcomers/immigrants and government, limited knowledge, and access to various systems (banking, education, transit, institution, etc.) in North America, barriers to volunteering and work experience.
- Newcomers also experience a great deal of pressure to integrate and find work, very soon after their arrival, which can limit their time spent on non-work-related activities and prevent full engagement of community life, such as participation in leisure and hobby groups, sports, activities.
- Challenges such as food insecurity, especially with accessing culturally appropriate food, lack of affordable housing, childcare and accessible transportation further exacerbate barriers to integration. As a result, other family members (often seniors), in multigenerational homes, step-in to support, which further isolates them from the community and prevents their integration.
- Ongoing issue of social isolation, especially after lockdown, has create a sense of lack of belonging and life satisfaction, particularly for youth and seniors.
- There is an overall challenge in navigating all the systems, laws, bylaws, regulations, and disjointed support to do so as a newcomer. And in general, knowing what services are available.

- There are few resources in new communities and limited transit options.
- Need for integration into Canadian society while being mindful and balancing respect for newcomer culture, language, etc.
- Culturally sensitive programs and services for various population is still needed (youth, seniors, LGBTQ2SI+).

### **Economic Wellness**

- Newcomers continue to experience economic hardship due to under-employment, lengthy credential recognition process, none-inclusive hiring practices, lack of affordable and available housing, childcare, and accessible transportation and limited opportunities and supports for vulnerable groups such as seniors and international students.
- The Canadian government accepts highly educated and skilled newcomer professionals to help fill the labour shortages in Canada. However, Canadian employers value Canadian education and work experience, which newcomers do not have. Thus, they are expected to undergo a credential recognition process, which is lengthy, expensive and may not yield positive results. Meanwhile, newcomers are forced to take-up low paying, part-time jobs, often termed “survival jobs” to gain Canadian work experience and help pay bills not only for themselves and the family that they have immigrated with, but also their relatives back home. If their credentials are not recognized, newcomers take students loans to upgrade their education and re-certify, or they continue with their survival jobs to make ends meet. Either path contributes to financial challenges or can lead them to be trapped in a cycle of poverty.
- In hopes of supporting newcomers in finding meaningful employment, the stress is placed on the social serving organizations who already have staff that are overworked and under-paid and can have high turnover as a result. This impacts service delivery and systemic change.
- Seniors and international students are at a greater risk of experiencing economic hardship, as tuition rates for international students are 3 times the rate of a local, they are not eligible for many services, and they have limited time to secure employment in their studies, soon after graduation.
- Seniors have limited English skills, physical ability, and accessibility to available transportation, on top of lacking Canadian work experience and education to secure employment. Many are also caring for family which impacts their ability to find employment or have Canadian experience.
- Additionally, inequitable practices by employers, such as outsourcing work to international low paying companies instead of hiring locally, as well as employers taking advantage of the system by offering part-time opportunities as to not have to offer benefits to newcomers.
- There is often limited access to affordable upgrading which makes it difficult/impossible to transition out of survival jobs.
- Housing is an ongoing and becoming main issue for many newcomers. Having adequate, safe, affordable housing is becoming an increasing challenge. Challenge of smaller houses/apartments/condos for larger family creates additional economic challenges and tradeoffs.

### **Physical and Emotional Well-being**

- Newcomers are experiencing negative mental health outcomes due to issues of social isolation, underemployment, burn-out, past trauma, financial constraints or poverty, lack of cultural safety, exposure to individual level and systemic racism, family issues back home and lack of in-person opportunities for connection.
- Lack of accessible (language, technology, and mobility barriers), affordable, and reliable transportation for seniors is contributing to the lack of connection that they are experiencing.
- Seniors, youth, and non-English speakers are the most vulnerable as there are limited supports for these groups. Need for targeted supports.
- Need for sharing of personal experience so that voices are heard directly, not just through surveys and statistics.
- There needs to be more focus on natural and informal supports in improving health and wellbeing for newcomers. And a focus on meaningful social connection.
- The need persists for culturally and trauma informed health care, mental health, services, and education. Especially for youth in schools.
- Focus on host engagement activities that are culturally appropriate, invites a diverse group to participate (intergenerational) and are within the communities that newcomers live in to promote and to deliver services.
- Health care inequalities in access persist.
- Continued focus on prevention-based wellbeing and social integration.

### **Language**

- For many newcomers, developing their English language skills is the priority in hopes of securing meaningful employment and integrating into Canadian society.
- Not all newcomers have access to funded language programs, such as LINC. Those who are eligible for language classes, can only access up to CLB 4 in the settlement agencies and then must move to an institution to take CLB 5-7 classes, which can create issues with continuity.
- An ongoing barrier to continuity of language classes after CLB 4 is the pressure to secure employment.
- Long waitlists persist to access certain classes.
- There is more support for widely spoken languages, such as English. There is an emerging need for supports in Vietnamese, Oromo, Tigrinya, Pashto and Parsi.
- There is not enough recognition of the robustness and importance of the French language and there is lack of support of the French language in social services.
- The population of French speaking immigrants are increasing, but there is no incentive for them to move to Alberta where English is prioritized.

### **Sector Collaboration**

This emerged as a theme on the online portal and was added as a topic of discussion. Overall, we heard that ongoing collaboration is needed in the sector in service delivery as well as to amplify efforts and share what is being done in the sector to help newcomers.

- Focus addressing systemicism both in the sector and for the populations it serves. Racism, sexism, ableism were the main ones shared.

- Connecting with smaller organizations as they are often overlooked in partnerships and collaborations.
- Creating connections among different immigrant groups as well as service providers for knowledge sharing, and action.
- Celebrating and recognizing the contributions of the sector and newcomers bring to Calgary.

**What we heard – recommended actions**

Priority Areas	Identified actions
Community life	Work with systems that newcomer’s typically access (especially grassroots and faith-based) to disseminate key information on eligible supports, services and initiatives offered in the local community.
	Focus on community connection, and wellbeing by removing barriers to access for different populations (seniors, youth, etc.)
	Help educate Canadians on ways to advance diversity and practice equitable treatment. Create connection.
	Create opportunities for more engagement initiatives targeted to newcomer seniors and youth who feel isolated and disconnected from the community.
	Advocate for more funding supports and/or subsidies for newcomers and their children to access recreational programs/activities regardless of immigration status.
	Work to remove systemic barriers to access, and community connection and awareness of what already exists.
Economic well-being	Underemployment, credentials, reasonable upgrading, and the culture of requiring “Canadian experience” persist preventing realization of full potential.
	Focus on relationship building, engagement with employers to understand barriers to jointly work on addressing them. Support agencies with employer engagement. Offering more employer engagement opportunities to help connect employers to potential newcomer employees. Including employers and professional bodies in process.
	Advocate for equitable hiring practices of employers, especially for vulnerable groups such as newcomer seniors and international students.
	Provide support with addressing issues of food insecurity, lack of affordable housing, accessible transportation, and childcare needs for newcomers.
	Design of Calgary and challenges in where affordable/appropriate housing is, community connection, work, and transit.
	Advocate for bridging programs and/or paid internships for newcomer professionals.
	Address existing barriers for international students in accessing eligible employment supports.
	Cycle of poverty through private sponsorship of refugees and need of family members to be advocates, translators, etc. limiting their ability and family to focus on employment.
	Focus on better information sharing with all newcomers about expectations, commitments, and realities of accreditation. Inform newcomers before arriving of the issues, needs, and expectations to ensure that they are making an informed decision.
	Identifying and addressing the challenges of career progression and upward mobility, especially for temporary foreign workers.
Continue to work on systemic barriers and inconsistencies in accreditation processes.	
Physical and emotional well-being	Bringing awareness to mental health needs experiences by newcomers and working to create interventions that are trauma informed, culturally responsive and socially just.
	Promoting and expanding natural supports to improve health and wellbeing.
	Continue to bring together mainstream and sector practitioners for information, practice sharing and improvements.
	Bring awareness to lack of newcomer youth and senior mental health supports and work to expand efforts in this area.

	Advocate for trauma informed, culturally responsive and socially just practice, especially in counselling.
	Expand recreational opportunities for newcomers, especially youth and seniors.
Language proficiency	Advocate to have all level LINC classes remain in settlement organizations to support continuity. And/or support better transition from settlement to higher level LINC classes.
	Advocate for more French language classes and supports.
	Offer equitable language access to all newcomers. Bring awareness to long waiting lists for language classes and work with government to reduce wait time.
	Advocate for professional translation need and funding in professional situations.
	Create collaboration networks in translation support across service providers, and with existing innovators like AHS, to share practices, resources, and address needs on a system level.
	Develop understanding and share top languages of need vs. top languages spoken in Calgary.
	Share services in various languages.
Sector collaboration	Bringing awareness of CLIP work at a systemic level and how it distinguishes from the work of the Newcomer Collaborative.
	Provide plain language information about supports and services for newcomers.
	Engage in marketing, communications, and information sharing across sectors to tell the whole story of services and available services in Calgary.
	Collaborate, support, and join efforts with community partners in creating welcoming communities.
	Sexism, ableism, racism and systemic discrimination and collaboration to address them both in society and in the sector.