

Newcomer inclusion

Winnipeg's total population has grown by over 71,000 people since 2021, and this expansion is primarily a result of permanent and non-permanent immigration to the city.¹ The most recent official demographics also show that a significant portion of Winnipeg's population is made up of newcomers, as they constitute 27.3 per cent of the city's inhabitants.² Indeed, there is widespread acknowledgment that the process of relocating and forming a community in a novel environment is taxing. Due to existing awareness of this difficulty, in February 2020 the City adopted the Newcomer Welcome and Inclusion Policy that aimed to make Winnipeg a more welcoming home for newcomers. The policy recognized that immigrants and refugees have distinct needs and aimed to improve access to City services while promoting public education on human rights, equity, diversity, and inclusion. However, there is still much work to be done to ensure that the policy achieves its objective.

The policy's aims center around tackling issues that are unique to newcomer communities. This primarily includes concerns regarding limited access to City resources, the development of education initiatives to promote intercommunal understanding and relationships, and planning reliable consultations with newcomer youth, ethnocultural leaders, and various other stakeholders to facilitate knowledge-building and prioritize their contributions. Through these processes, the core and long-term focus of the policy is to guarantee that the City is welcoming and provides timely and necessary supports for newcomers; that issues of racism, discrimination, and inequity are confronted in all institutions; to improve resource availability and accessibility; and to foster a labour force that illustrates the diverse characteristics of the City's population. The other



An outdoor soccer game in Winnipeg / Alanna Yuen

main commitment within the policy, and arguably the most important, is the process for active implementation. This refers to the strategy for rolling out the policy, as well as the administration of funds to address any required costs.

The Newcomer Welcome and Inclusion Policy was approved without dedicated, sustainable funding for its implementation. Despite ongoing advocacy efforts by Immigration Partnership Winnipeg (IPW) and other settlement organizations since the policy's approval, no implementation of funding has been allocated. Consequently, the City has been constrained in its ability to advance the meaningful, systemic changes necessary for newcomers to fully participate in and contribute to Winnipeg's social, civic, and economic life. Without the necessary resources to implement the policy, little to none of its outlined goals can be realized.

Various municipalities across the country have developed and launched policies and initiatives directed at prioritizing the inclusion of newcomers in their respective regions. For instance, the City of Kingston implemented a Workplace Inclusion Charter in partnership with the KEYS Job Centre.³ Its first phase, which debuted in 2019, focused explicitly on newcomers and was completed in 2020. Its purpose was to facilitate

inclusive work environments, and it did so by linking various organizations and employment entities with newcomer communities to identify concerns, challenges, and potential opportunities. This subsequently produced connections and relationships that translated into valuable social capital for newcomers in the labour force.⁴

The City of Edmonton established the Edmonton Immigration and Refugee Communities (EIRC) grant program specifically targeted at prioritizing the inclusion and integration of newcomers into the social, political, and economic fabric of the City.⁵ It recognizes the systemic and intersectional barriers that newcomers face when they emigrate to Canada and provides the necessary resources to ensure the growth and development of these communities.

In 2020 the City of Cambridge, in collaboration with Kinbridge Community Association, established the Cambridge Newcomer Outreach program. The initiative is funded by Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and prioritizes necessary supports for newcomer permanent residents, convention refugees, and Ukrainian Temporary Residents.⁶

In 2025, the Saint John Local Immigration Partnership (SJLIP), alongside Envision Saint John: The Regional Growth Agency, put forth a newcomer focused strategy titled “Pathways to Belonging.” The strategy emphasizes a combined approach from all City sectors to build a welcoming, inclusive, and economically resilient community. It is also a development upon prior strategies, such as the ‘Succeed and Stay’ plan from 2022.⁷

The City of Winnipeg’s current programming and spending disincentivizes forward movement on policies and initiatives that center around the improvement of newcomer inclusion and equity across varying sectors of the economy. This means that immigrants and refugees entering Winnipeg to start their lives in a new environment may encounter preventable barriers which could impede their wellbeing and their integration into the City’s community landscape. This is a disservice both to newcomers, who must endure various obstacles that make settlement more difficult, and to other members of the Winnipeg population who may be limited in their ability to learn alongside newcomers through the education objectives covered in the Newcomer Welcome and Inclusion Policy.

We urge the City of Winnipeg to prioritize and fund the recommendations outlined in the City’s own third phase of the Newcomer Welcome and Inclusion Policy report. These recommendations are

included in the policy's following strategic priorities: 1) A welcoming city, 2) A city without racism, and 3) Equitable and accessible services.

A funded and coordinated approach between municipal departments and settlement agencies would enable the City to move beyond aspirational commitments and translate the vision of the Newcomer Welcome and Inclusion Policy into tangible, measurable, and lasting outcomes.

If the City of Winnipeg is committed to becoming a truly welcoming and inclusive city, its policy commitments must be supported with the resources necessary to implement them. Meaningful inclusion requires sustained investment, and the upcoming budget presents a critical opportunity to demonstrate that commitment.

- **The AMB will** hire a contract-based Funding Development Consultant to support, in collaboration with Immigration Partnership Winnipeg, the implementation of the Newcomer Welcome and Inclusion Policy by identifying, securing, and managing external sustainable sources. Cost: \$115,000
- **The AMB will** incorporate programming in the Indigenous Relations Division to coordinate bridge-building events between Indigenous and newcomer communities. Cost: \$80,000
- **The AMB will** incorporate funding for a newcomer youth employment strategy under the community development division. Cost: \$100,000
- **The AMB will** support the Equity Office and settlement agencies to develop an anti-racism and anti-oppression policy, with funding used for both staff time and community consultations. Cost: \$100,000
- **The AMB will** contribute funding for a welcome fair where newcomers are celebrated and have the opportunity to learn about available resources. Cost: \$50,000

Notes

- 1 City of Winnipeg. (2025). "2025 Population Projections." <https://legacy.winnipeg.ca/cao/pdfs/2025-Population-Projections.pdf>
- 2 City of Winnipeg. (2021). "2021 Census Data." <https://legacy.winnipeg.ca/Census/2021/City%20of%20Winnipeg/City%20of%20Winnipeg/City%20of%20Winnipeg.pdf>
- 3 City of Kingston. (2025). "Workplace Inclusion Charter Expansion." <https://fsc-ccf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/workplace-inclusion-charter-expansion.pdf>
- 4 City of Kingston. (2025). "Workplace Inclusion Charter Expansion." <https://fsc-ccf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/workplace-inclusion-charter-expansion.pdf>
- 5 City of Edmonton. (2025). "Edmonton Immigrant and Refugee Communities Grant Program." https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/funding_grants/grant-emerging-immigrant-refugee-communities
- 6 City of Cambridge. (2020). "New to Canada." <https://www.cambridge.ca/mayor-city-council-government/new-to-canada/>
- 7 Bagha, Mohamed and Beckett, Andrew. (2025). "Pathways to Belonging: A Collaborative Vision for Newcomer Success in the Saint John Region." Saint John Local Immigration Partnership. <https://www.envisionsaintjohn.com/sites/default/files/2025-07/2025%20Regional%20Immigration%20Strategy%20EN.pdf>