

Growth-Related Challenges To Creating Welcoming and Inclusive Communities

What We Heard

Submitted by
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to

Honourable Hector Goudreau, Employment and Immigration
Honourable Ray Danyluk, Municipal Affairs
Honourable Lindsay Blackett, Culture and Community Spirit

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Executive Summary

There is tremendous opportunity to make the Alberta of tomorrow even better than it is today¹. This will require proactive and immediate attention to challenges created by our changing demographics.

Albertans are facing challenges because of our rapid growth. We are becoming more culturally and ethnically diverse as the province's advantages attract thousands of people from other parts of Canada and the world. This rapid increase in the population presents challenges for government, industry, community groups and other stakeholders, who must work together to ensure that effective supports and services are in place so these growing populations can thrive.² Although we are experiencing a downturn now, Alberta anticipates facing growth-related challenges in the coming years.

In recognition of this changing environment, three ministries, Employment and Immigration, Municipal Affairs and Culture and Community Spirit, jointly undertook an exploration of some of the impacts of this growth. They wanted to know what challenges municipalities, community agencies and immigrants to the province were facing especially as they related to settlement and integration.

Seven diverse communities were selected to gather feedback. The communities were Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, Red Deer, Lloydminster, Canmore, Brooks and Okotoks. There were 21 meetings scheduled over five weeks with elected municipal officials, community agencies, and members of the ethno-cultural community. Participants shared their ideas about what was working and what could be done better to encourage newcomers to become fully engaged in their new community. This report records the comments and suggestions that participants in these meetings made.

The level of awareness of the issues by those who participated in the meetings and their commitment and interest in becoming involved in building welcoming and inclusive communities was clearly evident. In every community, there was a desire and commitment to strengthen the community through economic, social and cultural inclusion.

Each community that was visited is unique in its composition, approach to community issues, and development of an engaged and inclusive society. Yet, there were similarities and recurring themes. Chief among them was the wish for their communities to be the best they could. Their desire for continued quality of life compelled communities to want to create a sense of belonging and participation for all community members.

¹ From Five Priorities for Alberta <http://priorities.alberta.ca/>

² Government of Alberta Strategic Business Plan Budget 2008

Participants were consistent in their identification of the measures that would help them the most to build welcoming and inclusive communities. They also indicated that all orders of government, public institutions, community organizations and the private sector all have a role to play in doing this work. Their comments have been brought together into six actions which would help resolve some of the growth-related challenges communities are facing:

- Provide stable settlement support and leadership in the integration of immigrants throughout the province.
- Provide more opportunities for accessible and low or no cost English language instruction.
- Continue to develop policies and programs that will integrate temporary foreign workers into our communities.
- Develop initiatives that will increase Albertans' understanding of the importance of creating welcoming and inclusive communities and that eliminate discrimination.
- Develop a strategy to assist individuals, community organizations, the business sector and government to learn how to deal with Alberta's diversity.
- Provide ongoing support for both established residents and newcomers to learn to live, play and work together.

Meeting participants recognize that Alberta is experiencing a broader mix of people from countries that have not been traditional immigration sources. Some immigrants lack the benefit of the social infrastructure of support that more established ethnic groups have. This is putting greater pressure on communities and organizations and these immigrants. Participants told us that the increasing ethnic diversity is creating challenges at the local level.

Communities and organizations want and need support to assist them in building welcoming and inclusive communities. Participants stressed that this will require proactive and strong leadership from the Government of Alberta to ensure full participation of all Albertans. There is concern that without intervention now, social tensions in communities are likely to grow. Now is the time to support municipalities and community agencies to ensure that everyone has access to opportunities and services, and can be an active part of Alberta's spirit to achieve.

We are at the front end of a curve where we are still able to engage in prevention. We aren't at integration yet.

Community Agency
Red Deer

Introduction

Rapid growth in Alberta has put pressure on communities to respond to the changing economic, social and demographic trends they are experiencing. The complex dynamics of growth can limit opportunities for participation and contribution for citizens, including newcomers to our communities. Three ministers, Hector Goudreau (Employment and Immigration), Ray Danyluk (Municipal Affairs) and Lindsay Blackett (Culture and Community Spirit) joined together to learn how a cross section of communities are dealing with these challenges. (See Appendix 1 for the Complementary Goals, Strategies and Mandates of the three ministries.)

To this end, the ministers provided MLA Thomas Lukaszuk, Parliamentary Assistant for Municipal Affairs and Chair of the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Education Fund Advisory Committee, with direction to lead a series of informal discussions in several diverse communities. These discussions built on previous consultations that the Advisory Committee hosted in 2007-08 with ethno-specific and diversity organizations in Calgary and Edmonton. The ministers wanted to hear how increased immigration was affecting communities and to learn more about their initiatives to welcome and be more inclusive of newcomers.

The information gathered will be used to assist the Alberta government to be more responsive and proactive to some of the trends that are identified within communities.

Two of Alberta's goals - attracting and retaining workers and ensuring that Albertans participate in the social, economic and cultural life of the province without discrimination – served as a foundation for these discussions. Seven communities provided a starting point to gather information. The communities varied in size and had varying levels of immigrant settlement services.

The communities visited were Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, Red Deer, Lloydminster, Canmore, Brooks, and Okotoks. In each community three meetings were held:

- The first meeting was held with elected municipal officials to discuss ways the Government of Alberta can work with municipalities to improve the coordination of responses to growth-related challenges in communities, including settlement services.
- The second meeting was held with the community agencies to identify challenges and opportunities that are impacting the creation of welcoming and inclusive communities where everyone has an opportunity to participate in and contribute to the life of the community.
- The third meeting was held with members of the ethno-cultural community to gather their ideas about what communities and municipalities can be doing to create welcoming and inclusive communities.

The results of these meetings are contained in this report which is a 'What We Heard' document. The report is a collection of the themes and opinions that were expressed. The points are the open and honest comments, ideas and suggestions that meeting participants provided.

This report uses a number of terms in a generic way. When the word immigrant is used, it includes all classes of immigrant and residency status. The term foreign worker includes all categories of temporary residents who are legally eligible to work in Canada. A Glossary of Terms and Concepts related to immigration has been included as Appendix 2. Newcomer includes anyone who has moved to the community. The term is not limited to those new to Canada.

In addition to identifying trends and issues that can be addressed by the Alberta government, participants also identified several problems that fall within the jurisdiction of the Federal government. Of particular concern was the policy that provides settlement funding to the province where the immigrant first arrives rather than the province where the immigrant lives. Comments specific to the Federal government have been summarized and are included in Appendix 3.

Challenges to Integration

In every one of the seven municipalities, the elected officials, community agency representatives and the ethno-cultural participants shared their desire to build a community that values and supports the contributions of all community members. A common goal was social inclusion. Participants also identified factors that are making it difficult for people to be fully engaged in the fabric of the community. Participants identified that integration support is required for both newcomers and the established community.

Immigrants suffer in silence rather than seek services.

Elected Official
Grande Prairie

Financial

Participants are concerned that lack of personal financial resources can limit the ability of Albertans to participate in the life of communities. Participants identified that immigrants and foreign workers in some instances are experiencing financial shortfalls. We heard that some immigrants are working in low paying jobs or are working in jobs that do not recognize their qualifications and education. In some cases, foreign workers may be faced with higher than expected costs in Canada, less take home pay than expected; payment of costs related to employment fees; and higher accommodation costs. In addition, they are sending money to family members in their country of origin. Participants said that:

- Immigrants to Alberta may be experiencing financial challenges.
- Immigrants and foreign workers often must work as many hours as they can in order to meet their financial obligations.
- Foreign workers may not have sufficient funds for language training courses.

- Immigrants and foreign workers may not have funds for extra activities that would help them connect meaningfully into the community.

Information

We heard over and over again that access to information is critical to the settlement and integration of newcomers. The needs of immigrants can be very complex and multiple services are often required. This often puts a strain on the newcomer who may not know what is needed or what can be provided, and does not know how to access the service. Members of the ethno-cultural community identified that services and information may not be culturally relevant. We heard that:

- Information provided to community agencies and immigrants is often not correct, it is difficult to find, and there is often no central source to find the information.
- Community agencies may receive incorrect or incomplete information which makes it difficult for them to provide accurate information.
- Immigrants and others that come from oral tradition cultures or experience low reading literacy do not respond to written information even if it is translated into their language.
- Information given to immigrants prior to their arrival in Canada is desirable but cannot be practically provided.
- Community agencies could provide more effective and efficient linking of clients to information and other service providers if they did not have to worry so much about the confidentiality required by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation.
- Community agencies want to be notified by employers when foreign workers are coming into the community so they can adapt their resources to support them.

The act of providing information is not sufficient alone. Basic learning does not occur until something happens to link the learning. You can show me how to fix my car but it is unlikely that I will be able to fix the car until I have to.

Community Agency
Okotoks

Education and Cultural Knowledge

We were frequently told that without the understanding of the nuances of culture and cultural ways, barriers to integration and conflict may arise. This understanding is required by both the established and immigrant communities. Participants suggested that:

- The receiving community, as well as immigrants, need to develop cultural understanding about each other.
- Immigrants need to learn about Canadian systems and practices in order to integrate effectively.
- Organizations need to become more culturally competent.
- Settlement services must be repeated with each new arrival.
- Settlement services require follow up and relationship building to be successful.
- Children need to receive learning and language support in the school system no matter when they arrive in the term.

- Children need to be promoted to the next grade based on their ability not on their age.
- Teachers need to receive ongoing diversity training to prevent cultural misunderstanding.

Social Integration

Communities recognize that welcoming and inclusive communities build opportunities for people to become involved in local activities and organizations. This opportunity for engagement is important for everyone because it creates an environment where all residents feel like they belong. The community agencies also highlighted the importance for residents to feel involved and to take an active role in decision making. We heard that:

- Settlement is learning about shelter, jobs, and food. However, integration is a process.
- Community agencies need stable and ongoing funding - not just project funding.
- Stable funding to support all newcomers is required.
- A lead agency needs to be established in each community as the contact for and support of newcomers.
- Public institutions such as RCMP and city council should reflect the demographic communities they serve.
- Newcomers that can build one-on-one relationships with neighbours and community agencies have more successful integration experiences.
- Communities must engage people in the civic, political and cultural aspects of the community.
- Individuals and community agencies want to help immigrants to integrate but don't know how.
- Children need to find acceptance and support to diminish the possibility of gang recruitment and drugs.
- Families require support to handle the often long separation caused by the immigration process particularly for foreign workers and refugees.
- Families, particularly those of foreign workers and refugees, require support as they re-forge family bonds or create new ones after long separations created by the immigration process.
- Immigrants need to create a solid connection to the community in the first six months to prevent them from leaving to go to other communities.

Just because our problems are not acute, it does not mean they are any less in the rural communities. They are just the same problems in proportion for rural communities.

Community Agency
Canmore

Two of the reasons that people leave the community are to find a larger ethno-cultural community or because the local community is not welcoming.

Community Agency
Lloydminster

Language

Lack of English language is identified as a huge barrier to integration for all status immigrants and their families. Having trained instructors and programs that are appropriate to the learner is seen as critical. Some of the identified consequences of

limited English are lack of information, negative and incorrect information, limited ability to interact with others, dependence on often unscrupulous individuals who speak both languages, and difficulty accessing basic needs. Participants said that:

- Language instruction needs to be available at a variety of times and locations and offered at a cost that is not prohibitive.
- Language course viability is impacted by factors such as the English language level, past educational experience and age of the learners.
- Community agencies often don't see those with limited English until their personal situation has become desperate or is at a crisis.
- Immigrant women, in particular, are isolated by lack of English language.

Discrimination and Inequities

In every community, community agencies and members of the ethno-cultural community provided examples of discriminatory practices. These stories provided a glimpse of how difficult it must be for some Albertans to feel like they belong. They reinforce the notion that some Albertans are not ready to tolerate our increasing diversity of people.

Participants said that:

- Canadian experience is often used as a way to exclude someone from being hired.
- Some established Canadian workers won't work with immigrants – especially those of African background.
- The mainstream community is not accustomed to diversity.
- Some Albertans don't want immigrants to be part of the community.
- The mainstream community does not see that racism exists.
- Established residents sometimes feel that the increasing number of immigrants and newcomers makes them feel like they no longer belong in their own communities.
- Established Canadians sometimes are apprehensive and fearful of immigrants especially if they are culturally and visibly different.
- Established Canadians may be apprehensive when a group from a specific culture congregates in a place of worship, a bar or an apartment complex.
- Some established Canadians are expressing concern with increased need for intercultural contact.
- Established Canadians are becoming frustrated with or resistant to diversity.
- Racism will not go away.
- Students are experiencing racism and bullying in schools.
- Some workers believe that if you speak up for yourself, you will be replaced.
- Immigrants need to be aware of their rights and responsibilities upon their arrival.

You cannot let the treatment by others bother you. When you leave your house, you take your dignity and openness with you. However, you must leave your dignity at the door and just go forward with openness.

Ethno-cultural Participant
Red Deer

It is important to respect temporary foreign workers as human beings.

Ethno-cultural Participant
Fort McMurray

Systemic Discrimination

Community agencies and members of ethno-cultural groups identified that social and organizational structures, including policy and practices, unintentionally exclude, limit or discriminate against individuals who are not part of the dominant group. Some examples given in the meetings include:

- Immigrants without Canadian experience do not qualify for reduced car insurance.
- Immigrants who can qualify for a mortgage on arrival in Canada are required to have a larger down payment than an established Canadian.
- Second stage immigrants, those who have moved from another province, sometimes believe that Alberta discriminates against them because a service that was available in their former province is not provided in Alberta.
- Newcomers qualify for different services depending on place of origin, immigration status and other factors, which creates inequities.
- Services and programs are often provided without recognition that modifications to the way they are delivered might be required to meet the needs of diversity community members.
- Community agencies want to provide services for all newcomers and do not want to differentiate between refugees and immigrants with permanent residence, and the foreign workers.

Housing

Lack of affordable, available and appropriate housing was discussed in every community. Municipalities are finding it difficult to balance the diverse needs for accommodation within the available resources. It is difficult for planners to accommodate changing community needs. For instance, housing that is built to accommodate families with more than four children is not available. We heard that:

- Housing must be affordable and available.
- Municipalities and community agencies want to ensure that cultural enclaves are not developed.
- Newcomers who lack a Canadian credit history cannot get mortgages.
- Some newcomers are not welcome as tenants because they turn up the heat to approximate temperatures they are familiar with or because they are unfamiliar with Canadian practices like how to use a vacuum.

Why are we continuing to bring people to Alberta when our infrastructure and services are maxed out? We can't support what we have.

Community Agency
Brooks

Transportation

In every community, participants identified how being able to get from place to place within the community is vital to the integration and participation of community members. The ability to get to work or school, to leave the house, to get medical treatment or to participate in social activities is difficult if access to transportation is limited. We heard that:

- Public transportation is not economically feasible in smaller communities.

- A barrier to integration and participation in the community is lack of transportation and this also contributes to isolation.
- Some immigrants don't know that you need a license to drive or how to drive.
- Immigrants to Alberta may come from places where it is normal to walk long distances and the weather is not a safety issue.
- Some immigrants come from places where bicycles are one of the key forms of transportation.
- Programs and services offered in neighbourhoods are not always as effective as ones delivered centrally.
- Buses provide an opportunity to socialize.

Temporary Residency

Foreign workers are working throughout the province, including in communities that have not historically received large numbers of immigrants. Meeting participants often felt the very nature of a program that brings temporary residents to a community creates problems for those who are trying to build pride in their community and cohesive neighbourhoods. Some went so far as to recommend that the temporary foreign worker program should be cancelled in favour of one that provides opportunities for permanent residency and integration into communities immediately.

We heard that:

- Foreign workers do not have support to begin their integration process.
- Foreign workers are often viewed by others as temporary even when brought in to fill labour shortages that will continue to exist after their contracts are completed.
- Foreign workers and community agencies have been incorrectly informed that foreign workers cannot volunteer.
- Foreign workers may be worried about their employment and whether they will be approved to stay under the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program.
- Foreign workers may not have transportation to travel from their residence to community-based activities.
- Foreign workers may be working long hours and sending most of their money home.
- Foreign workers who arrive with their families have an increased opportunity to integrate when their children are involved in school.
- Families struggle with the shift in power when the children interpret for their family, thereby setting up unprecedented family dynamic.
- Community members are cautious about investing their time and energy in helping newcomers who they think are temporary residents.
- Community members and agencies are not differentiating between foreign workers and immigrants nor is it their desire to treat them differently.

Due to the constant turnover of the temporary worker, the welcoming community resources are continually taxed.

Elected Official
Canmore

The community can let them [temporary foreign workers] flounder for two years when they first arrive and then pick up the pieces when they get permanent residency or be proactive.

Community Agency
Okotoks

Labour Market Shortages

A key frustration in every community was the use of temporary foreign workers to meet labour market shortages. This creates different kinds of integration challenges which did not exist when only workers who have permanent residency were hired.

Participants in the meetings felt strongly that employers should shoulder more of the burden of helping their employees integrate. Participants suggested:

- Employers need to contribute resources toward settlement services for temporary workers.
- Employers need to invest in temporary workers by providing integration and language learning support at no cost to the employee.
- Employers need to provide transportation to and from work for temporary workers.
- Employers need to ensure they are not hiring temporary workers when available resources are in the community.
- Employers need to treat temporary workers as more than just a stable workforce for two years.
- Temporary workers need to be recognized as human beings and not as a rented or borrowed commodity.
- Temporary workers and their families require English language education.
- Temporary workers need to receive a copy of their contract to prevent misconceptions and misinformation.
- Temporary workers are often illegally charged employment placement fees and unusually high rental accommodation fees.
- Temporary workers are subject to being taken advantage of due to their fear of deportation, their lack of knowledge and language, and fear of authority.

Treat me with dignity and respect. I live in a standard of living below what I lived at home and I work really hard. When I apply for my family to join me, I'm made to feel I am trying to do something wrong. Why would you come as a temporary foreign worker if you don't think it will turn into something honourable?

Ethno-cultural Participant
Brooks

Assets

While all of the seven communities are experiencing growth-related challenges, it is clear that the municipalities, community agencies and residents are creative, committed and determined to find workable solutions. When asked what assets exist in their community, the most frequent response was "the people who live here." Participants in the meetings identified a variety of community supports that are helping them respond to the challenges of newcomers to their communities. They include:

- The library was frequently mentioned as an excellent resource. Libraries have accessible hours, they provide most of their services at no or

It is important to find a way to communicate with home as they [temporary foreign workers] miss their families. They often have no support system in their new community.

Community Agency
Canmore

low cost, they are responsive to community needs, and they are neutral and friendly places. In some cases, they are also located within neighbourhood communities.

- An organization working on community issues was seen as helpful. In some cases, communities held interagency meetings where information was shared, strategic approaches developed and collaborative initiatives implemented. Other communities have established a Welcoming and Inclusive Community Committee that is identifying and addressing newcomer challenges.
- Settlement agencies and services were seen as a key resource because the staff are specialists in dealing with immigration and settlement issues. They are professional and knowledgeable.
- An organization is needed that is dedicated to dealing with integration and support for the host community. These organizations might assist with developing cultural competence, reduce discrimination and racism, encourage civic participation from non-traditional sources and support institutional change. These organizations must, however, have the resources to sustain this complex and long term work.
- Faith communities are often where newcomers first meet more established residents. They sometimes have programs to welcome newcomers, and provide volunteers and services to support members of their faith community and others.
- Volunteers and the programs they operate provide vital and well received services.
- The regional colleges are seen as an excellent support to communities.
- Schools can provide newcomers with an avenue to meet others. They can connect families and help them, especially mothers, to feel part of a community.

Promising Practices

In each of the seven communities, there was a commitment to building a strong community that is viable and healthy. Every community had different needs and structures. The networks, organizations, attitudes, leadership and skills allowed each community to develop according to their own priorities and capabilities. Communities were emphatic that it takes both a conscious and conscientious effort to address issues. They talked about how difficult it is to take advantage of opportunities, to find common ground and to balance the competing interests in order to make improvements in the community. They all recognize that more needs to be done. Communities are doing the best they can in responding to their increasing diversity. Some examples of ways communities are addressing these challenges include:

- Interagency meetings on a monthly basis are important to keep abreast of what is happening in the community and to resolve overlap and gaps in the services for the community.
- In-home family presentation sessions consisting of 12 visits that help with such things as working skills; banking; going to the grocery store, library, and school; visiting other resources in the community and answering questions are especially helpful. This is a one-on-one resource.

- The library, in all of the communities, is the natural meeting place and the heart of the community. Because the library becomes a gathering place for new community members, an English as a Second Language (ESL) program was incorporated into its programming.
- ESL provided by an employer on the premises for the workers is mutually beneficial. If there are openings in the classes, the company invites non-English speakers from smaller businesses and the community to attend at no charge.
- Community volunteers provide ESL when it is not available in some communities.
- 'Live in Canada Series' which is a one hour lunch box session includes topics such as how to buy a car; employment services; what do I need to know to drive a car; how to access health services, etc. This is provided through a library development grant and is attended by 50-60 people.
- An advisory committee maps and coordinates the current services and what will be required in the future. Sometimes these are translated into languages other than English.
- Social settings provide opportunities for families or neighbours to mingle. Examples include a Sunday Fun Day which is held once per month, block parties, and pot lucks with immigrants and non immigrants sharing their culture through food.
- Activities such as Heritage Day celebrations are viewed as a positive reinforcement of the social fabric of the community.
- Community gardening is a tool to bring immigrants and non-immigrants together. The community provides plots for those who want to garden and then work together.
- A program such as the Aboriginal Workplace Participation Initiative (AWPI) that is working successfully is being examined for use with immigrants.
- Host programs act as a one to one resource with a volunteer providing community living skills and a link to a positive relationship within the community. These programs empower good citizenship and provide follow-up services.
- Work internship programs for skilled workers to gain Canadian experience were identified as a positive approach. Consideration could be given to trades being certified through this one year probationary period.

Conclusion

All seven communities told us that while they have similarities, they are unique. The communities let us know that they are at different stages of understanding and capability. The amount of time and resources they are allocating to developing welcoming and inclusive communities varies. We were reminded that the approaches they are using to address their issues differ in each of the communities. They stressed that the solutions to growth-related challenges need to be tailored to the individual community.

In each of the seven communities visited, participants showed a commitment to the people who live in the community and to making the community the best it can be. The municipalities and community agencies focused on creating an environment that supports all the people who live there to participate and contribute fully to the life of the community. In several communities, participants cautioned the provincial government to ensure that programs or services are developed for the community as a whole not for specific groups of individuals.

Communities are concerned that they have limited knowledge dealing with the racial and cultural diversity they are now experiencing. Communities are having difficulty absorbing the number of immigrants and their diversity without dedicated resources and support. This is compounded by the presence of foreign workers. Municipalities and community agencies told us that when policies and programs of the Alberta government focus primarily on supporting the economic health of communities, there is added pressure on those working on the local level to attend to the human aspects of integration.

We were told that all immigrants need integration if they want to be successful. They require educational opportunities to speed up the integration process. Participants stressed that long term integration strategies are needed for newcomers to the community no matter what their immigration status.

Community agencies stressed that the acute and complex nature of the needs of immigrants means that there is a higher need for services. They find that their services take longer to deliver, more explanation is required, more agencies may need to be involved and the provision of information needs to be repeated. They want the provincial government to recognize that the standards for service provision may need to be enhanced to accommodate the changing demographic.

Immigrants need sufficient English language skill; knowledge of Canadian systems, values and culture;

ACTIONS

Provide stable settlement support and leadership in the integration of immigrants throughout the province.

Provide more opportunities for access and low or no cost English language instruction.

a receptive established community that accepts them and knows the culture of others without resistance to it; and a link with the established community. A key to achieving the goal of full civic engagement is having adequate English language ability.

There is overwhelming concern about the current conditions faced by foreign workers and the long term consequences of using foreign workers. There is growing anger about the inequities and abuse that these workers are experiencing. Those that participated in the meetings stressed the importance of providing opportunities for foreign workers to begin their integration process immediately rather than waiting until their status has changed to permanent resident. Several participants identified the effect on the local community of foreign workers who arrive here without their family. These include increased use of drugs and alcohol, family break down, less opportunity to integrate into the communities where they live, and more funds leaving the community to support family abroad. Another concern communities discussed is the fatigue they are experiencing as they continually try to cope with and integrate the changing cohort of those brought in to provide short-term labour market solutions.

There is a sense of frustration and fear being expressed in several of the communities. Municipalities and community agencies know they have to respond to what they see developing in their communities. We heard that this is new territory for a majority of them. They don't know how to respond. They are overwhelmed and don't have the financial and human resources to respond.

Participants voiced concern about the considerable work that is needed to combat individual discrimination and racism and to generate support for systemic change. This systemic change is needed to ensure that everyone has access to opportunities and services and can be an active part in Alberta's spirit to achieve.

Municipalities and community agencies have a desire to increase their skills and knowledge about dealing

ACTIONS

Continue to develop policies and programs that will integrate temporary foreign workers into our communities.

Develop initiatives that will increase Albertans' understanding of the importance of creating welcoming and inclusive communities and that eliminate discrimination.

with diversity but it is difficult for them to access this kind of support due to the lack of specialists in this area.

There is growing concern that increased migration by those who are culturally different from the established community will create stresses in the community unless we prepare now for the changes that are coming. Elected officials, community agencies and community representatives all want to maintain their sense of community and to have pride in their community. They know this can only be achieved if residents feel like they belong. Participants in the meetings felt it was critical for them to provide established community members and newcomers with opportunities to work together for common community purposes.

Communities want and need to establish processes for civic engagement. They want individuals and groups to be involved in decision-making. Participants told us that public institutions need to involve and listen to the diverse voices in the community and that changes need to be made to respond to the input and expertise of these individuals and groups.

In every community we were told that Alberta's increasing ethnic diversity requires proactive responses. Providing services for immigrant settlement is essential but is not sufficient on its own. Communities and organizations want and need support to assist them to remove barriers to full participation of all Albertans.

There is a general feeling that our communities are at a critical place in time. We were told that the provincial government can introduce some proactive responses to help municipalities and communities deal with the growth-related challenges that come from increased migration from other provinces and elsewhere or they will suffer the consequences that will result from being ill prepared and lacking resources and expertise to respond.

At these community meetings, participants said that the slowdown in the economy has given their municipal governments and community agencies a chance to

ACTIONS

Develop a strategy to assist individuals, community organizations, the business sector and government to learn how to deal with Alberta's diversity.

Provide ongoing support for both established residents and newcomers to learn to live, play and work together.

catch their breath and to reposition their organizations. Participants said that it is also an opportunity for the Government of Alberta to be strategic and to put some preventative measures in place that will encourage social inclusion and full participation.

Increasing understanding of differences, increasing civic engagement, changing systems and institutions, and improving public attitudes are all interrelated strategies that were identified as ways to contribute to democratic, vibrant and healthy communities. We were challenged to move forward to build the equity-based, inclusive, and flourishing society to which we aspire by addressing the barriers to full participation in community life.

Appendix 1

Complementary Goals, Strategies and Mandates

Background

Ministers, Hector Goudreau (Employment and Immigration), Ray Danyluk (Municipal Affairs) and Lindsay Blackett (Culture and Community Spirit) joined together to learn how the Government of Alberta can work with municipalities to improve the coordination of responses to growth-related challenges in communities, including immigration settlement services. Copied below are the complementary goals, strategies and mandates related to this three ministry initiative.

Mandate letter for Thomas Lukaszuk, Parliamentary Assistant for Municipal Affairs

One of the tasks in the letter is

- Work with municipalities to improve the coordination of responses to growth-related challenges in communities, including immigration settlement services.

Culture and Community Spirit

Ministry goal related to mandate letter:

- Albertans participate in the social, economic and cultural life of the province without discrimination.

Ministry strategies related to mandate letter:

- Develop and implement strategies that help build welcoming and inclusive communities and workplaces, particularly for immigrants and ethno-cultural and racial groups.
- Address the elimination of barriers limiting Albertans from participating in society through support from the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Education Fund.
- Support non-profit organizations and public institutions in building their capacity.

Employment and Immigration

Ministry goal related to mandate letter:

- Alberta is able to attract and retain workers to the province.

Ministry strategies related to the mandate letter:

- Continue to implement *Supporting Immigrants and Immigration to Alberta* by developing policies, programs and services to address the needs of immigrants and focus and strengthen Alberta's role in immigration.
- Provide temporary foreign workers and their employers support to ensure they are aware of their workplace rights and responsibilities.
- Ensure settlement services, bridging programs, credential assessment services and language training services effectively support the integration and retention of newcomers to Alberta.

Appendix 2

Glossary of Terms and Concepts³

Economic immigrants: Permanent residents selected for their skills and ability to contribute to Canada's economy. The economic immigrant category includes skilled workers, business immigrants, provincial or territorial nominees and live-in caregivers.

Family class immigrants: Permanent residents sponsored by a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident living in Canada who is 18 years of age or over. Family class immigrants include spouses and partners (i.e., spouse, common-law partner or conjugal partner); parents and grandparents; and others (i.e., dependent children, children under the age of 18 whom the sponsor intends to adopt in Canada, brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces and grandchildren who are orphans under 18 years of age, or any other relative if the sponsor has no relative as described above, either abroad or in Canada).

Federal skilled workers: Economic immigrants selected by the Government of Canada for their ability to participate in the labour market and to establish themselves economically in Canada. Skilled workers are assessed on the basis of selection criteria that stress education, language ability and skilled work experience rather than a specific occupation.

Live-in caregivers: Persons granted permanent resident status as economic immigrants after their participation in the Live-in Caregiver Program. This program brings temporary foreign workers to Canada as live-in employees to work without supervision in private households to care for children, seniors or people with disabilities. Participants in this program may apply for permanent resident status within three years of arrival in Canada, once they have completed two years of employment as live-in caregivers.

Other immigrants: Permanent residents in the other immigrant category include post-determination refugee claimants, deferred removal orders, retirees (no longer designated under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act), temporary resident permit holders, humanitarian and compassionate cases, sponsored humanitarian and compassionate cases outside the family class, and people granted permanent resident status based on public policy considerations.

Permanent residents: People who have been granted permanent resident status in Canada. Permanent residents must live in Canada for at least 730 days (two years) within a five-year period or risk losing their status. Permanent residents have all the rights guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms such as equality

³ Adapted from Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism's (CIMC) Facts and Figures, 2007. For more information visit www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/menu-fact.asp.

rights, legal rights, and mobility rights, freedom of religion, freedom of expression and freedom of association. They do not, however, have the right to vote in elections.

Principal applicants: Permanent residents identified as the principal applicant on their application for a permanent resident visa for themselves and, if applicable, for accompanying spouse and/or dependants when they applied to immigrate to Canada. For individuals or families applying to immigrate to Canada in the skilled worker category, only the principal applicant is assessed on the basis of selection criteria in place at the time of the application.

Provincial or territorial nominees: Economic immigrants selected by a province or territory for specific skills that will contribute to the local economy. A nominee must meet federal admissibility requirements, such as criminality, health and security. In Alberta, it is called the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program.

Refugees: Permanent residents in the refugee category include government-assisted refugees, privately sponsored refugees, refugees landed in Canada and refugee dependants (i.e., dependants of refugees landed in Canada, including spouses and partners living abroad or in Canada).

Seasonal Agricultural Worker: The Seasonal Agricultural Program (SAWP) allows the organized entry of foreign workers to work in agricultural labourer occupations in Canada. The SAWP was developed by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) in cooperation with agricultural producers and a number of foreign countries including Mexico and several Commonwealth Caribbean countries.

Second stage immigrants: Immigrant and refugees that have moved from another province.

Spouse and dependants: Permanent residents who are the spouse, common-law or conjugal partner, or dependent children of the principal applicant.

Temporary Foreign Workers: Temporary residents who enter Canada mainly to work and have been issued a work permit (with or without other types of permits). Some temporary jobs in Canada may not require a work permit—for example, news reporters, public speakers, performing artists, foreign government officers.

Appendix 3

Federal Government Jurisdiction

Communities all agreed that Service Canada offices are an important and appreciated information resource in smaller communities. Participants expressed numerous concerns related to federal immigration policies and programs. These comments are included as part of this report because they are impacting the ability of communities to integrate newcomers.

Temporary Foreign Workers

- Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW) are often treated as a commodity rather than a person.
- TFW often arrive with misconceptions and misinformation that they will be allowed to stay permanently.
- TFW program is not readily available or clearly understood and there is considerable misinformation about it.
- TFW don't know their rights, rarely report abuse due to fear and cultural uncertainty.
- Recruiters/agents in country of origin are still a big problem. For example, they make unrealistic promises and continue to charge the immigrant high placement fees.
- The TFW program has numerous variables such as length of contract, with or without family, TFW contracted to one employer while family member is not, eligibility for services, etc. This makes it difficult for companies, community agencies and TFW to have correct information.
- Labour Market Opinions can take a long time (6 months).
- TFW and their employers that terminate their relationship before the end of the contract, typically leaves the TFW without income for about 3 months while the paperwork to switch jobs is being completed.
- TFW are not eligible for some of the services their permanent resident counterparts can assess. e.g., Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC).
- Integration into the community is slowed if the TFW has limited English, wants to work as many hours as possible and spends as little money as possible.

Immigrants

- Immigrant status differences are not understood by most Canadians and are confusing when it comes to eligibility for services and programs.
- Immigrants need information before they come to Canada to help them better prepare and be more realistic in their expectations.
- Federal funding for settlement and language programs does not follow the newcomer, which puts a strain on the second stage immigration province.
- Immigration process is too long and difficult often causing family stress and leaving the newcomer in limbo.
- Canadian born Francophones are not eligible for English language programs.
- Canada should consider the Australian practice of evaluating education, credentials and skills and advising immigrants prior to emigration of the type of work eligibility.