

# **An Equity Approach to Policy Change: Reviewing C529 Policy on Immigration and Settlement**

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## Land Acknowledgement

This land has been welcoming guests for tens of thousands of years. We wish to thank the Indigenous peoples of Treaty Six Territory: the Cree, Blackfoot, Metis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others. We are indebted to their grace, hospitality and sacrifice. And for the weaving of the rich fabric of histories, languages, and cultures of this place. May we fall in love with this land, continue the grace we have received for all peoples and celebrate the unity that grows out of our diversity.

Je tiens à souligner que le Focus Group, se tient sur le territoire traditionnel visé par le traité No 6, une terre d'accueil pour les peuples du monde entier. Je souhaite donc rendre hommage aux divers peuples autochtones dont l'empreinte a marqué ce territoire au fil des siècles, tels que les Cris, les Sauteaux, les Pieds-Noirs, les Métis et les Sioux des Nakota. **(French)**

Sa libo-libong taon, maluwag sa pusong tinanggap ang mga bisita sa lupain na ito. Nais naming pasalamatang ang mga katutubong at unang tao dito sa Treaty 6 territory tulad ng: Cree, Blackfoot, Metis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway - Sauteaux - Anishinaabe, Inuit at maraming pang iba. Malaki and utang na loob natin sa kanila sa biyaya, kabutihan at sakripisyo na ibinigay at inalay nila sa atin. Higit sa lahat, sa paghabi ng hibla ng kasaysayan, mga wika at kultura sa lugar na ito. Sana ay patuloy nating mahal in ang lupain na ito, pangalagaan ang mga biyaya na tinatamasa natin at ipagdiwang ang ating pagkakaisa mula sa ating pagkakaiba-iba. **(Tagalog)**

数万年来, 这片土地欢迎四面八方的来客。我们向原住民 the Cree, Blackfoot, Metis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Anishinaabe, Inuit, 以及其他人士表示感谢。我们感谢他们的恩典、热情好客和牺牲, 以及对丰富的历史、语言和文化做出的贡献。愿我们爱上这片土地, 延续我们从原住民们手中接受到的恩典, 庆祝我们源于多样性的团结一心。 **(Mandarin)**

ਪਿਛਲੇ ਹਜ਼ਾਰਾਂ ਸਾਲਾਂ ਤੋਂ, ਇਸ ਧਰਤੀ ਨੇ ਕਈ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ੀਆਂ ਦਾ ਸਵਾਗਤ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੈ। ਅਸੀਂ ਏਥੇ ਦੇ ਵਸਨੀਕਾਂ ਦਾ ਧਨਵਾਦ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹਾਂ: ਕਰੀ, ਬਲੈਕਫੁਟ, ਮੇਤੀ, ਨਕੋਟਾ ਸਿਓ, ਏਰੋਕੁਆ, ਦੇਨੇ, ਅਨਿਸ਼ਨਾਬਿ, ਇਨੂਈ ਓਰ ਕਯਿ ਹੋਰਾਂ ਦਾ। ਅਸੀਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਰਹਿਣ-ਸਹਿਣ ਤੇ ਕੁਰਬਾਨੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਅਹਿਸਾਨਮੰਦ ਹਾਂ। ਉਹਦੇ ਨਾਲ, ਅਲਗ ਅਲਗ ਬੋਲੀਆਂ, ਸੰਸਕਾਰ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ, ਇਕ ਗਹਿਰਾ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਬੁਨਵ ਲਈ। ਅਸੀਂ ਵੀ ਏਸ ਧਰਤੀ ਨਾਲ ਪਯਾਰ ਕਰੀਏ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਤਕਾਰ ਦੇਨਾ ਤੇ ਅਲਗ ਅਲਗ ਹੋਕੇ, ਇਕ ਦੁਜੇ ਨਾਲ ਰਹਿਣ ਦੀ ਸਿਖਿਆਂ ਜਾਰੀ ਰਖੀਏ। **(Punjabi)**

Dhulkani wuxuu soo dhawaynayay martida tobanaan kun oo sano. Waxaan rabnaa inaan u mahadcelinno dadka asaliga ah (indigenous) ee Treaty Six Territory: Cree, Blackfoot, Metis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Anishinaabe, Inuit, iyo kuwo kale oo badan. Waxaan abaal ugu haynaa nimcada, martigelinta iyo naf u hurid. Iyo taariikhda hodanka ah ee luqadaha, iyo dhaqanka meeshan. Waxaa mudnaan mudan in aan jaceylaano dhulkan, aan sii wadno nimcada aan ku heysano dhamaanteen, una dabaaldagno midnimada ka dhalata kala duwanaanshahayaga. **(Somali)**

## Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the 58 staff from across the City of Edmonton who took part with enthusiasm in this series of online conversations about their work in the summer of 2022. Their passion for change - and their determination to help build a more equitable, inclusive City and community - inspire us. We hope we have captured their insights closely about how the City can engage and work in new ways with newcomers and migrants in Edmonton.

We are indebted to the hard work and passion of the community animators and documentors for capturing the lived experience of the community participants in the various focus groups across communities.

1. China - Mian Wang and Documentor- Sally Xu
2. Eritrea- Sabrina Gebreyesus
3. French/Francophone - Salamane Yameogo and documentor- Anna Ouedraogo
4. India - Simran Gulati and Documentor Gauri Bhardwaj.
5. Mexico - Alejandra Diaz Flores
6. Nepal - Priyanka Sharma and Documentor Manira Gautam
7. Pakistan- Amna Zafa
8. Philippines - Nicole Nebril and Documentor- Roanne Andaya
9. Sierra Leone - Martha Sellu and Documentor- Kai Ngegba
10. Somalia - Abdi Omar and Documentor Mulki Ali

We also acknowledge the skillful coordination of the community focus groups and support for the community animators and documentors: **Tania Ymbi, Community Animator Coordinator** and **Dr. Mitali Banerjee, Executive Director** from the Edmonton Multicultural Coalition.

Our sincerest appreciation to the leaders and members of the various civic committees and community collaboratives who provided us with their insights on their work with and service to newcomers and migrants.

More importantly, we are humbled by the stories and wisdom of participants in the community focus groups and the **Rainbow Refuge Group**, and their coordinators, **Sara Buczynski** and **Basel Abou Hamrah**. We will strive to make your stories live and grow so that equity can become a reality.

## Executive Summary

In June 20, 2021, City Council passed a motion directing the City Administration to “review and refresh City Policy C529 Immigration and Settlement (2007), to ensure alignment with concepts identified in the year one State of Immigration and Settlement report.” The C529 Policy Review began in February 2022 grounded in the key concepts from the 2021 State of Immigration and Settlement Report, framed from an equity lens and guided by three pillars: people-informed policy, the vital role of cities and the concept of migrants as city makers.

### **Engagement as the centre of the policy review process**

The Policy Review included designing and conducting a two-pronged, robust, meaningful and collaborative engagement process to inform policy change. It reached out to a diverse cross section of newcomers and migrants, civic committees and community collaboratives and City staff whose work involves newcomers. A total of 239 individuals in focus groups and interviews participated in discussions that ranged from their lived experience as newcomers and migrants, supporting and advocating for migrant interests, to the opportunities and challenges faced as City staff serving newcomers.

Their voices and their message was clear: there are persistent and enduring challenges that migrants faced over the years and an urgent call to finally tackle the systemic roots of their struggles. More importantly, the City of Edmonton as the front line of contact and the on-the-ground jurisdiction accessible to them, must take a leadership role in finding the pathways to a secure future and a sense of belonging and inclusion for migrants in the city.

We heard from the community that a public City commitment to advancing newcomer integration and success is needed at the highest level. We heard from City staff that a policy, that is City wide, provides a strong platform for all parts of the City to work together to support newcomers. A framework and strategy, while important, are strengthened by being grounded in a clear Council policy.

This policy review report concludes with a set of recommended policy directions that have been largely shaped by the insights from the community and City staff and informed by a scan of approaches to immigration and settlement advanced by other Canadian cities. The recommended policy directions include: Inclusive Economy, Service Equity and Access, Civic Participation and Communications, Data for Action, Neighbourhood Inclusion and Leadership.

It’s time for a serious shift. It’s time to reflect, reframe, reshape and reiterate the City commitment to newcomers in Edmonton. It’s time to work together with communities in new ways to create inclusive, equitable and welcoming conditions for migrants to fully participate and thrive in Edmonton.

## People Informed Policy: An Equity Approach

*Migrants are builders of resilience, agents of local development and city makers.*  
~ William Lacy Swing , International Organization for Migration

### Direction for Review

Grounded in transformational concepts that will shift the discourse and attitudes around newcomers, the 2021 State of Immigration and Settlement Report, entitled *Belonging: the Stories of the Dignity and Resilience of Immigrants* featured migrants as integral contributors to the social and economic wellbeing of Edmonton. [State of Immigration and Settlement | City of Edmonton](#)

The 2021 Belonging Report flagged opportunities for new approaches and policy change in Edmonton. Specifically, it identified the need to review and refresh the City's C529 Immigration and Settlement Policy (2007), and resulted in a Council motion directing Administration to conduct this review in alignment with foundational concepts of the Belonging Report.

*That Administration review and refresh City Policy C529 Immigration and Settlement (2007), to ensure alignment with concepts identified in the year one State of Immigration and Settlement report, which may include the development of a framework or strategy to improve outcomes for Refugees/Newcomers/ Migrants in Edmonton. Due Date: November 2022*

The Policy Review and Refresh has been carried out in alignment with the research and writing of the 2022 State of Settlement and Immigration Report, using an Integrated Framework, that made possible shared engagement and research findings.

### The C529 Policy and Review Process

The C529 Policy and Review is an integrated process guided by insights and concepts emerging from the 2021 SIS Report and engagement of those who will be impacted by an updated policy.

### Three Key Pillars

The C529 Policy Review is centred on three key ideas:

1. **People Informed Policy** : The Review is grounded in the transformational idea of people informed policy that centres insight from those most impacted by a policy. This approach focuses on how systems, policy and people intersect and the potential of good policy, informed by lived experience of newcomers, to advance equity and inclusion.

2. **The Vital Role of Cities** : The Review reflects the conviction that municipalities play a vital role in building inclusion and a city where all belong. Although municipalities may not have the resources or political policy levers of other orders of government, their decisions and how they work with communities for change significantly impact the daily lives and belonging of newcomers.
3. **Migrants as City Makers** : The Review builds on the 2021 SIS Report, Belonging: The Stories of Dignity and Resilience of Immigrants, that highlights the role of migrants as powerful city makers and agents of local development and change.

### **Core Concepts**

Four core conceptual frameworks of the 2021 SIS Report have inspired and shaped the development of the Policy Review, the design of the engagement sessions and the research for the 2022 SIS Report:

- Community Cultural Wealth and Multidimensional Immigrant Models - acknowledge the strengths and assets migrants bring and how municipalities like Edmonton can harness these to achieve economic and social vitality
- Social Inclusion - identifies strategies for removing barriers to economic, socio-cultural and political inclusion and addresses the role and contribution of municipalities
- Anti Racism lens - brings a focus to the policy review and engagement that reflects Edmonton City Council's recent 2022 approval of the Anti-Racism Strategy intended to identify the inequities experienced by racialized peoples, reveal the systemic roots (organisational structure, policies and practices) and challenge the unequal distribution of power
- The Dimensions of Integration Framework by Agar and Strang addresses notably the employment and education markers and research for the 2022 SIS Report, as well as the relevant areas in the policy review and update

### **An Equity Tool for Analysis:**

An Equity Analysis Tool was developed as part of the Review to conduct a conversation-based, equity-centred scan of a diverse sample of City policies as well as programs and initiatives that intersect with newcomers and reflect the seven policy areas of the C529 Immigration and Settlement Policy (2007). This analysis tool was developed from a range of intercultural, equity-based and anti-oppression assessment tools.<sup>1</sup> The City of Edmonton's GBA+ approach, as an example of an equity tool, was also referenced to ensure that the analysis aligns with City expectations.

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<sup>1</sup> Protocol for Assessing Equity-Mindedness in State Policy. January 2017. Rossier School of Education. University of Southern California. [https://cue.usc.edu/files/2017/02/CUE-Protocol-Workbook-Final\\_Web.pdf](https://cue.usc.edu/files/2017/02/CUE-Protocol-Workbook-Final_Web.pdf)

## Expected Outcomes

This equity approach to the C529 Policy Review will result in:

- A model and learnings for further equity-focused City policy development and review that other cities may look to for inspiration
- A current, community-informed, evidence-based revised policy that reflects a strong City commitment to enable a better life for all migrants and refugees in Edmonton
- Increased participation and engagement of migrants and refugees in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the community
- Improved safety and wellbeing and a greater sense of belonging and quality of life for all immigrants and refugees to Edmonton.

## Engagement of Newcomers, Migrants and City staff

The Policy Review included designing and conducting a two-pronged, robust, meaningful and collaborative engagement process to inform policy change. It reached out to a diverse cross section of newcomers and migrants, community organisations and community collaboratives connected with newcomers and community-based City Advisory Committees. It also involved interviewing City staff whose work involves newcomers. Two comprehensive What We Heard Reports capture the process, resulting deep insights and powerful policy implications that surfaced in these two people-centred engagement processes:

- Our Voices: Engaging Migrants on Belonging and Inclusion
- Working Towards Equity: What We Heard from City of Edmonton Staff

## C529 Immigration and Settlement Policy 2007

The purpose of this policy is to enable the City, within its mandate as municipal government and service provider, to work with all other orders of government; economic, social and cultural institutions and immigrants to attract newcomers and provide support to enable immigrants to develop a sense of identity, belonging and full participation in the social, economic, cultural and political life of Edmonton.

To achieve this PURPOSE, the policy from 2007 also identified the City's commitment to action in 7 policy areas: **Economic Integration, Intergovernmental Relations, Service Equity and Access Planning and Coordination, Communication, Public Awareness and Education, Community Building and Inclusion and Immigrant Women.**

## Strategy to Support the C529 Policy

A Strategy to Support the C529 Policy was developed in 2010 that outlined a comprehensive set of actions to implement the seven policy areas. Since 2010, the City of Edmonton has initiated a range of programs and initiatives to carry out the goal of C529 Policy and are still being implemented. These include:

- Multicultural Relations Office to support the work arising from the implementation of the C529 Policy and Strategy that included multicultural liaison officer positions
- Multicultural Facility Development Plan that supported the construction of multicultural centres across the city that are now fully operational
- First corporate Diversity and Inclusion Policy and the Diversity and Inclusion Framework and Implementation Plan that has evolved into the current Art of Inclusion Plan
- Female Only Swim Program and now known as the Women, Girls and Transgender Inclusive Swim Program
- Emerging Immigrant and Refugee Communities (EIRC) Grant Program for smaller ethnocultural organisations
- A multilingual Newcomers Guide available in print and online
- Incorporating newcomer and cultural considerations in the Leisure Access Program (LAP) and RIDE Transit

The continuing implementation of these programs and initiatives speak to the relevance of the C529 Policy and demonstrate the capacity of the City to engage in immigration and settlement support. However, immigration has been steadily increasing despite a temporary slow down during the COVID Pandemic. In the 15 years since the policy was adopted, Edmonton has changed significantly, influenced by the broader shifts in demographics, social discourse, global and national events and more importantly the emerging priorities specific to inclusion of newcomers in the new homeland. Hence, the need to review the C529 Policy.

### **C529 Policy Content Analysis: an essential first step to lay out gaps and opportunities**

The policy review started with a content analysis of the C529 to examine the degree to which it reflects the SIS concepts, current values and practices that relate to equity and inclusion. The content analysis identified several considerations for updating the C529 policy:

- Policy framing from the current and envisioned future **reflect the concept and language of the 21st century** with a stronger focus on interculturalism, social inclusion, racial equity and the City's 30-year vision and 10-year strategic plan
- **Naming populations impacted** with their intersectional identities and the differential impacts of the proposed policy including their talents and strengths
- **Naming systemic inequities** with more depth and substance that recognizes barriers have root causes which this policy intends to address
- Incorporating **diverse cultural perspectives** to reflect respect and recognition of diversity beyond corporate guidelines such as context, tone and language



- Articulating clearly the link of this work on newcomers to **Indigenous Reconciliation** and worldviews.
- Designating accountability and corporate stewardship of the next version of the policy will ensure **sustainable leadership and championship** that will withstand inevitable organizational changes
- Articulating a set of **driving values or guiding principles** that resonate with Equity in the City Plan, corporate policy values and most of all the concepts and values in the SIS Belonging Report 2021.

## Setting the Stage

### The Current State

Edmonton has enjoyed an accelerated growth in new immigrant arrivals since 2000 that has significantly changed the city's demographic landscape<sup>2</sup>. About a third of the city's one million population have ethnic origins other than European and speak over 125 languages. The new arrivals bring a wealth of talents and skills across different categories of immigration: skilled workers, refugees, family, students and temporary foreign workers.

Alberta placed 3rd with 89% rate of retention among Canadian provinces while Edmonton came in third place at nearly 85% retention rate from Vancouver and Toronto<sup>3</sup>.

### COVID Pandemic and Immigration

With COVID 19 vaccines readily available, declining hospitalizations and loosening of restrictions, the impacts on cities and migrants presents a checkered reality of favourable and adverse effects<sup>4</sup>. For example:

- Since mid 2021 immigration numbers have been returning to pre-pandemic levels indicating a rise in new arrivals in Canada's large and mid-sized cities
- Job recovery strengthened for many diverse groups in the second half of 2021
- High inflation and modest wage gains suggest that pressures related to affordability will worsen in the near term—especially if prices for food and shelter continue to rise.
- Those expecting that the pandemic would impact their finances constitute 61% compared with those anticipating no impact at 32%.

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<sup>2</sup> For details, please see State of Immigration and Settlement in Edmonton - Annual Report 2021. City of Edmonton.

<sup>3</sup> [Canadian immigrants most likely to stay in Vancouver, Toronto and Edmonton | Canada Immigration News \(cicnews.com\)](#) CIC Dec 2021

<sup>4</sup> [COVID-19 in Canada: A Two-year Update on Social and Economic Impacts \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#) March 2022

## Linguistic Diversity<sup>5</sup>

When they are at home, 4.6 million Canadians mostly speak a language other than English or French, an increase of 16 percent since the last census in 2016 and a number that has been slowly rising over the last three decades. One in four or 9 million Canadians had a mother tongue other than English or French and were more likely to live in urban areas.

Statistics Canada's 2021 Report on Linguistic Diversity highlighted a strong growth of the number of Canadians who speak Mandarin, Punjabi and Tagalog, predominantly at home. Languages spoken are closely linked with the identity and cultural heritage of Canadians. Languages are an integral part of the everyday lives of Canadians—be it in early childhood, at home, at school or at work, in their community.

## Federal, Provincial and Local Immigration Developments

### Federal

In February 2022 Canada released its 2022-2024 Immigration Levels Plan, revealing the government is planning to increase the number of new permanent residents coming to Canada over the next three years. In 2021 IRCC exceeded its target by welcoming more than 405,000 immigrants. In 2022 this target will rise to 431,645 new permanent residents (PRs). In 2023 Canada will aim to welcome an additional 447,055 immigrants and in 2024 another 451,000, the highest levels in Canada's history<sup>6</sup>.

### Provincial

On February 16 2022 Alberta announced two new immigration programs for rural and entrepreneur immigration: the Alberta Advantage Immigration Program (AAIP)<sup>7</sup> intended to promote Alberta as an attractive place to work and raise a family” In 2021 Alberta nominated 6,250 newcomers to apply for permanent residence.

### Local Refugee Influx to Edmonton

While the federal government controls the levers around immigration, cities like Edmonton are on the front lines of receiving and integrating newcomers. Below are just three recent examples of refugee arrivals to this city that reflect this global trend:

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada. August 2021. While English and French are still the main languages spoken in Canada, the country's linguistic diversity continues to grow.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220817/dq220817a-eng.htm>

<sup>6</sup> [Canada's Immigration Levels Plan 2021-2023 | Canadavisa.com](https://www.canadavisa.com/canada-immigration-levels-plan-2021-2023/)

<sup>7</sup> [Alberta immigration: New PNP name, programs, and draw results | Canada Immigration News \(cicnews.com\)](https://www.cicnews.com/news/2022/02/16/alberta-immigration-new-pnp-name-programs-and-draw-results/)

- **2021-22 Afghan Refugees** - In January 2022 100 Afghan human rights defenders arrived in Edmonton, following some 80 refugees in October 2021 as part of Canada’s commitment of 40,000 Afghan refugees fleeing their country after the Taliban took over
- **Syrian Refugees** - Edmonton also welcomed a rapid and urgent influx of over 2,500 Syrians fleeing war in the months after November 2015 and many more are expected to arrive to fulfil Canada’s promise to resettle 25,000 refugees.

## The City Policy Ecosystem and Equity

### Policy and an Equity Lens

*“Systems, policies and standards that lack understanding/incorporation of Indigenous and other cultural assets and ways of knowing, that therefore impact disadvantaged Edmontonians negatively.”*

Edmonton Community Safety and Well Being Strategy 2022 Framework Pillar #4, Equitable Policies focusing on support to marginalized Edmontonians using a GBA+ lens policy review and development and equity-based monitoring.

The Review of the C529 Policy must be considered against the backdrop of an evolving ecosystem of City policies, decisions, strategies and initiatives. Since 2007, a number of new City of Edmonton strategic plans, policies and initiatives that have implications and relevance for the C529 Policy Review have emerged. Some documents predate the COVID 19 pandemic, while others have appeared in response to the pandemic and strong community movements around equity, inclusion and anti-racism.

This C529 Policy Review’s equity lens aligns with Edmonton’s Corporate Policy Framework which requires the use of GBA+ in policy development and review. The chart below shows a changing trajectory of approach, grounding concepts and language that points to a more intentional approach to City work and could reflect City efforts towards equity-seeking groups in Edmonton.

### Overarching City Policies and Plans Intersecting with Newcomers

<b>Council and Administrative Policies</b>	<b>Strategic Plans</b>	<b>Frameworks/Strategy for Action</b>
<b>Immigration and Settlement C529</b> <b>Public Engagement Policy C593A</b> <b>Access to Municipal Services without Fear C606</b> <b>Affordable Housing Investment Guidelines C601</b> <b>Living Wage( for City Employees and Employees of Contracted Services) C612A</b> <b>Diversity and Inclusion Policy C538</b> <b>Respectful Workplace Policy A1127</b> <b>Sustainable Procurement Policy C556B</b>	<b>City Plan</b> <b>ConnectEdmonton</b> <b>Edmonton</b> <b>Economic Action Plan</b>	<b>Anti Racism Strategy</b> <b>Community Safety and Well Being Strategy</b> <b>EndPovertyEdmonton Strategy</b> <b>Corporate Policy Framework</b> <b>Art of Inclusion/ Diversity and Inclusion</b>

## What We Heard Highlights

The C529 Policy Review engaged a total of 239 individuals from the migrant communities, leaders from civic committees and community collaboratives and City of Edmonton staff. This section presents highlights from the full report of What We Heard is available in a companion document of this report.

### Part I: Working Towards Equity - What We Heard from City Staff

This Policy Review is an opportunity to revisit, rethink and reframe the City's role around newcomers, integration and inclusion- and to do it at a time when Edmonton continues to welcome refugees and immigrants from around the globe. Edmonton City staff interviewed as part of this engagement offered invaluable insights with implications for the C529 Policy Review. Their insights are fully captured in a final report entitled, Working Towards Equity: What We Heard from City of Edmonton Staff<sup>8</sup>. This report also shares examples of systems barriers identified, opportunities for action and illustrative promising practices in work around newcomers and equity.

#### Participants

A total of 58 City staff participated in small group conversations covering 42 diverse City programs and initiatives from across 7 City departments. The intent was to capture a representative sampling of current City work involving and impacting migrants and newcomers to provide a snapshot of how equity shows up in their work, to inform the C529 policy review.

- **People Informed Policy** Grounded in the core concept of a people informed policy approach, this Review engaged migrant community members most impacted by the policy as well as a group of Edmonton City staff.
- **An Equity Tool** An Equity Tool was developed to provide a set of questions to determine the equity mindedness present in City initiatives being reviewed. The tool focused on four essential elements of equity analysis: **Intentionality, Addressing Barriers, Sharing Power and Equity Framing/Data.**

**Theming and Validation** Once interviews using the Equity Tool were complete, a process review identified common themes and ideas. These were clustered in the four areas of equity, and together with draft Guiding Principles, were shared with all 58 City participants inviting additional insights and comments. The themes and principles received positive support and further ideas provided were incorporated in this Final Report.

#### Overall Observations

- **An Appetite for Change:** City Staff participants engaged in conversations with enthusiasm, insight and openness, displaying a passion for their work and the

<sup>8</sup> Companion Document to this report.

intention to learn more about equity informed approaches in working with newcomers and migrants.

- **A Time of Transition:** While examples of emerging equity-minded approaches to work with migrants and newcomers were shared, it is clear that the corporation is in a powerful state of transition and has a long way to go in all four equity areas. A time of great opportunity, it is impacted by the pull of entrenched, systemic practices and challenging budget scenarios.
- **The Ripple Effect:** Participants who have begun to implement an equity-minded approach described the positive ripple effect that staff team diversity and varied perspectives bring to every aspect of their work. They reflected on how using an equity approach has propelled them beyond traditional operational roles and catalysed more creative, impactful efforts to engage and impact newcomers and migrants.

### Core Themes - Collective Insights

Core themes that emerged from City staff conversations aligned with the four equity areas of analysis in the Equity Tool.

#### Intentionality

Intentionality lies at the core of equity mindedness. Participants reflected an interest in beginning to explore more targeted, intentional work with equity seeking groups like newcomers. While there seems to be growing awareness across City departments that a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work, and that newcomers experience systemic barriers, some continue to focus on the idea of serving "all citizens" and many still use deficit language in regards to newcomers that frames them as needy, vulnerable or hard to reach.

Awareness of the City-mandated GBA+ tool to help identify barriered populations is widespread among those interviewed and many were able to identify the target groups they hope to reach, and the resulting benefits. Some expressed concerns, however, that GBA+ might become a checklist exercise and not fully develop its potential to impact ongoing, daily work of the City beyond initial planning stages or reporting.

*We hope that instead of using language that is focused on deficits and needs, we can include more language that acknowledges gifts and resilience.*

*We are often reactive and need to take opportunities to be more proactive to reach newcomers, inform and engage them.*

#### Addressing Barriers

City staff participants indicated they have tried to identify barriers facing newcomers in their programs. Both institutional practices or systems barriers as well as individual barriers were identified. They identified some understanding of the multiple layers of

roadblocks newcomers face as they cope with individual challenges in addition to the systemic intersecting barriers posed by institutions like the City.

Specific City institutional barriers noted include: daunting bureaucratic processes and procedures, lack of diversity on City staff teams, language/communications barriers and lack of awareness of City service and access, as well as economic inequities facing newcomer youth, and issues of affordable, adequate cultural space for ethnocultural groups. In conversation, it was clear that City staff acknowledge the urgent need to address existing systemic barriers- both operational and attitudinal- in creative, culturally sensitive ways to support migrants and newcomers.

*We need to study the impact of the system and see who it is really working for. We can be more thoughtful about how our system interacts with different demographics, and be more effective.*

*While some City staff understand the human perspective, others get lost in the data or rules. Can we change the City role, can we look for creative solutions?*

### **Sharing Power**

In this time of transition, as the City moves to a more relational approach in its work, the concept of welcoming and involving newcomers in city building seemed to resonate with City staff interviewed. While not representing a power shift in itself, it reflects an emerging awareness among City staff of the newcomer experience of inclusion and belonging. Participants shared examples, both big and small, of how they are attempting to incorporate intercultural awareness and different approaches in their work. Despite this, it appears that beyond initial stages of program development, power is in fact less frequently shared by the City with community members through the implementation and evaluation stages.

*We need to change our processes, including use of a GBA+ lens, to expand engagement beyond the usual groups, to broaden the intersection of people of various identities.*

*Yes, we are reaching out to those cultural groups that want to engage with us, to help us adjust our facility experiences in a way that welcomes and includes them.*

*We brought this inclusion lens to every decision, and felt we had the flexibility to move beyond pure logistics and operations, to a more people focused, inclusive and strategic approach - to try some innovative stuff.*

### **Equity Framing/Data**

In conversations held with City staff about the intersection of their work and newcomers, a picture emerged of a disconnected, incomplete picture of data collection at the City. City staff also acknowledged the need for data, in all its diverse forms and complexities, as essential to inform greater intentionality when it comes to working with newcomers. While work is underway in some areas across the City to pursue better data and disaggregated data, there is a long way to go.

Staff expressed strong interest in learning more about data of different kinds and how it can strengthen City initiatives. Some identified data team efforts but also shared their concerns about disaggregated data, the resources and capacity needed to collect it, and the complexities around privacy.

*Data is limited, especially racialized data, but we can see the importance of collecting information from participants, to ensure diverse folks are getting served.*

*We have data on groups using our space... but we also need to include qualitative data, perceptions and experiences of people.*

*We are not doing a great job of hearing from people who are NOT using our services.*

### **Implications for Policy Change**

City staff insights suggest three overarching implications for the C529 policy review that all support a transformational change in the way the City works. It was expressed by one participant in these words:

*We can do things differently. The policy needs to encourage staff to work differently.*

### **#1 A Bold Leadership Commitment**

**A bold, whole-of-City commitment in the revised policy will proclaim the City's intent to create equitable, welcoming conditions for migrants and newcomers to thrive.** A strong policy commitment will provide the foundation for the City and newcomers and ethnocultural communities to work in new ways together, to actively partner to build a resilient, diverse and equitable community.

City staff highlighted the powerful impetus a high level corporate commitment brings and how it can kick start new City efforts, support innovation and risk taking. A strong policy - centering around shared leadership of the City with newcomers and increasingly robust ethnocultural communities - will support new approaches across the entire City to working towards equity with migrants and newcomers in an evolving, complex municipal context. It will also provide a foundation for effective advocacy to other orders of government. Two additional leadership-related points include:

- The need for explicit identification of a corporate steward to be accountable for regular reporting to Edmontonians on progress and a deliberate involvement of community voices in the governance/oversight model.
- City staff noted the need for the revised policy to feature the links between migrant communities and Indigenous communities and reconciliation.

### **#2 An Intentional Intersectional Lens**

**A revised C529 Policy will centre and support a city-wide intentional intersectional approach.** Growing a deep and robust GBA+/ equity minded approach across City departments, a process just getting underway. Support intentional identification of newcomers and help address barriers, and enhance access and opportunities for newcomers and migrants across all City services. Implementing this

intentional intersectional approach may focus on several areas of opportunity flagged by City staff:

- *Workplace recruitment* - of diverse staff, including those of newcomer and immigrant background, to better reflect the needs of an increasingly diverse city. Creating and promoting meaningful opportunities for migrant newcomers, especially young people, as volunteers, paid workplace interns and student placements.
- *Address the data gap* - by supporting the creation/enhancement of a robust go-to corporate hub, with the needed human and financial resource capacity, to provide data and skills in support of equity work with migrants.
- *Infuse cultural diversity in communications and engagement strategies* - expliciting targeting newcomers. Using creative, innovative approaches, and engaging at the local neighbourhood and district levels, break down language barriers, grow awareness about the City and use new cultural platforms and models.

### **#3 A System Shift**

**To power a whole-of-City commitment and nourish an intentional intersectional approach that impacts newcomers and migrants, mindset and system shifts are needed.** Policy Review conversations with City staff reflected the sense of a City in the early stages of transition to a new more community driven, culturally focused approach. It is also evident that a core group of City staff are already beginning to make this shift, considering and testing how they might embed equity in their daily work. They are clearly eager to learn more and do this better.

This move towards equity and sharing power with newcomers and migrants is an essential policy direction for a revised C529. Some tangible opportunities emerged that will foster shifts in attitude and systems across the corporation:

- Commitment to deep intercultural learning and everyday use of equity tools, along with support to work in new ways and to share both challenges and successes across City siloes.
- Model and celebrate strength- and equity-based language, grounding City work in the concepts of the Multi-dimensional Immigrant and Cultural Wealth.
- Encourage and support innovative, responsive, shared leadership styles and partnership models of working with newcomers - where the City learns from newcomers, not the other way around.
- Explore and bridge the work with newcomers with that of the City's commitment to advance Reconciliation with Indigenous communities.

### **Conclusion**

The revision of C529 needs to provide a strong, future-focused City policy commitment to work with migrants, newcomers and ethnocultural communities using an equity and inclusion lens for the next decade, and beyond. The important policy implications



shared by City staff members, as well as those gleaned from concurrent community conversations with migrants, will shape this people-informed policy review. In conclusion, some final thoughts from one City staff member:

*It's time for this kind of work to be done.*

## Part 2: Our Voices: engaging migrants on belonging and inclusion<sup>9</sup>

### NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US, .... IS FOR US<sup>10</sup>

"Nothing About Us Without Us" ("*Nihil de nobis, sine nobis*") means that no policy should be decided without the full and direct participation of members of the group(s) affected by that policy<sup>11</sup>. Rooted in history<sup>12</sup>, this has become a powerful slogan for groups that are often marginalized from political, social, and economic opportunities.

The review of the City of Edmonton's C529 Policy is anchored in this core tenet: to engage people who are most affected by the policy. The people most impacted by this policy are migrants - newcomers from all immigration categories, those who have been in Canada for a long time and their children, those in precarious migration status as well as those who are still in the process of obtaining permanent residency. Their stories of struggles and hopes are vital in grounding policy intended for them.

The community engagement process involved the following steps:

1. **Recruiting community participants** - 10 migrant communities were identified to reflect demographic and geographic diversity, visibility and degree of vulnerability. Participants in the focus groups reflected diverse identities - age, gender, sexual orientation, migration status, length of residence and geographic distribution across the city. The community discussions also engaged those who are in leadership roles in the community such as members of civic committees and community collaboratives such as WAVE, ECYC, AAC, ELIP and EPE.<sup>13</sup>
2. **Engaging participants with community animators** - the focus group discussions were led and facilitated by the *community animators* who are bilingual and bicultural facilitators.. Community animators from their own cultural community and who speak their language can effectively establish rapport, familiarity and a level of comfort with participants especially when

<sup>9</sup>For details, please see the companion document for this report.

<sup>10</sup> Nothing about us with- out us is for us. Based on a slogan popularised by South African disability rights and youth activists. Centre for the Study of Political Graphics; Scottish Council for Voluntary Organizations. [<https://scvo.scot.nhs.uk/13499/2016/09/05/nothing-about-us-without-us-is-for-us>]

<sup>11</sup> Nothing About Us Without Us. [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nothing\\_About\\_Us\\_Without\\_Us](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nothing_About_Us_Without_Us)]

<sup>12</sup> "Nothing about us with us" originated in Poland's 1505 constitutional legislation, *Nihil novi*, which first transferred governing authority from the monarch to the parliament. It subsequently became a byword for democratic norms. It is also a long-standing principle of Hungarian law and foreign policy, and was a cornerstone of the foreign policy of interwar Poland. In modern times, It has been the battle cry in the disability rights movement in the 1990s and later on framed the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convention_on_the_Rights_of_Persons_with_Disabilities) in 2004. [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nothing\\_About\\_Us\\_Without\\_Us](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nothing_About_Us_Without_Us)]

<sup>13</sup> WAVE (Women's Advocacy and Voice in Edmonton), CEYC (City of Edmonton Youth Council), AAC (Accessibility Advisory Committee), ELIP (Edmonton Local Immigration Partnership) and EPE (EndPovertyEdmonton).

discussing difficult topics. They are also familiar with communication styles of the participants and can easily incorporate cultural nuances in asking the questions and probing for more details in the focus groups. Community documentors fluent in the participants' first language took notes of the focus group discussions and afterwards translated them into English.

A group of newcomer refugee LGBTQ+ called the Rainbow Refuge Group hosted out of the Edmonton Centre for Newcomers had their own discussion to highlight their unique experience and realities from other migrant communities.

Conversations with civic committees and community collaboratives were led by the consultants that relate to their perceptions and observations of the core issues in immigration and settlement and their insights on a municipal policy supporting newcomers.

3. **Theming and validating of the community discussions** - themes were extracted to show patterns of responses from the participants by clustering similar ideas together and presenting these themes back to the participants for feedback and additional insights.

### **Community Participants**

A total of 181 individuals participated in the community focus groups distributed as follows:

- Migrants lived experience community focus groups - 101
- Community animators focus group - 12
- Rainbow Refuge Group - 15
- Civic committees and community collaborative - 53
  - Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton (WAVE) - 5 participants
  - City of Edmonton Youth Council (CEYC) - 7 participants
  - Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)- 2 participants
  - EndPovertyEdmonton - 2 participants
  - Edmonton Local Immigration Partnership ( ELIP) - 37participants

### **Emerging themes from the Community Focus Groups**

The community discussion centred on their lived experience relating to the C529 policy areas and their insights on how their current situation can be improved from pathways to a secure future in employment, access to services and support and inclusion and belonging.

The participants spoke with clarity and honesty about their experience, expressed genuine concerns about how persistent issues could be truly addressed, especially by the City of Edmonton and felt hopeful about opportunities for change with a sense of urgency for action.

The conversations with members of these civic and community groups showed a high level of awareness of newcomer issues and the systemic roots of these issues. Many of the participants underscored the role of municipalities, in particular the City of Edmonton, in addressing these issues.

All four community groups who participated in the discussions revealed five emerging themes that resonated from their lived experience as newcomer migrants, community leaders and service providers.

### **Overarching problem: Inequity and racism**

Participants believed that the problem that newcomers face is inequity rooted in racism historically entrenched in Canada's immigration policies. It starts with an unfair immigrant selection system focusing on skills that will not be recognized in the Canadian employment sector. This inequity is extended once the newcomer starts to access services and support needed for settlement and integration - from language barriers to cultural differences to discrimination. This inequity is aggravated when a newcomer has disabilities where access to employment is further limited.

*Poverty and underemployment for visible minority*

*Unaffordable housing and living in crowded homes*

*The city must recognize the reality of racism and must develop mitigation strategies to integrate visible minorities in their work force.*

### **Long-term underemployment of migrants: chronic and persistent impacts**

The devaluation of foreign credentials which includes education and work experience create the conditions for prolonged employment in low paying jobs for many newcomers that have multiple impacts: loss of opportunities, mental health issues, poverty and many others. It underlies the challenges that migrants struggle with on a daily basis such as:

- Housing affordability due to increasing rent, limited subsidized housing and inability to own a house
- Affordability for essential services such as transit, daycare, activities for children and youth
- Risk of being exposed to financial fraud
- Mental health issues from daily stresses of earning a living
- Domestic violence related to gender role conflicts, stress of daily living and lack of knowledge about available support for women in abusive situations

Participants made it clear that there is a sense of urgency to tackle these problems that have persisted for a long time and they want to see actions beyond just talking about them. They yearn for more involvement from their communities in the solution-seeking and action-taking efforts.

*Diversity and inclusion of the City of Edmonton is just lip service, but not a truly and meaningful action.*

*The city must have a measurable and trackable policy of hiring visible minorities. Community representatives doing outreach in the community, although they may be ignored it is still beneficial to reach people who might not be as willing to read a booklet. The city can hire volunteers and employees from immigrant communities.*

### **Focus on newcomer living with disabilities**

Since 2018, Canada's immigration admission system has been updated to adopt a new policy on medical inadmissibility that balances the protection of its publicly funded health and social services and updating the policy to bring it in line with current views on the inclusion of persons with disabilities.<sup>14</sup> It considers migrants living with disabilities to have as many skills to bring to Canada. Yet, settlement services have not been well-prepared to support them. There have been situations of acquired disabilities particularly for those who have temporary status. There is a need to increase attention on how we welcome and support newcomers living with disabilities.

### **Disconnect with the City**

Most of the participants indicated that they receive little or no information about what the City does - from services and programs to events and activities. Many of them could not tell the difference between the services provided by the three orders of government and lamented the lack of visibility and presence of the City Council in their communities.

There were more participants engaged in electoral participation such as voting and campaigning for a candidate than in public engagement. It is also worth noting that of the ten participating ethnocultural communities, four communities had neither heard about nor participated in public engagement which accounts for 80.5% of participants including those who said "no" in the other groups.

### **Belonging and Inclusion Difficult to Reach with Racism**

Many participants have positive experiences moving into their neighbourhoods for the first time with people from their cultural communities welcoming and friendly neighbours and city staff helping them.

The most painful experience that can happen to a newcomer in the city is to be told to go back to where they come from. Many participants recalled being called names, children attacked and just ignored. They have lived through daily experiences of racism in their neighbourhoods, schools, and public places.

### **A Sense of Hopefulness and Finding their Voice**

Participants still conveyed a sense of hopefulness that things could get better. The

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<sup>14</sup> Government of Canada. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. April 2018. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2018/04/government-of-canada-brings-medical-inadmissibility-policy-in-line-with-inclusivity-for-persons-with-disabilities.html>

election of the first immigrant Mayor and a diverse City Council was seen as a positive change in the city. They were enthused to provide an abundance of ideas for the City to reach out to and connect with migrants, diversify the City's workforce, build partnerships with their communities and most of all, recognize that they also have responsibilities to learn how to work with the City.

Participants acknowledged that their participation in these focus groups is one way of making their voices heard. To be able to influence how an immigration and settlement policy in the city can be changed is a significant involvement for them.

*There's a reason we're all here, it means that we've had experiences (to share).*

*Community organizations can act as a liaison between newcomers and the city- information about its services can be passed on from the community organisations to the people.*

### **Our Collective Insights to Inform C529 Review**

The wealth of knowledge gathered from the experience of the participants was dense and thick in content and emotions. Within the context of the C529 Policy Review, the intent is to extract the most essential elements of their lived experience and breadth of insight so that it informs the design of an updated policy in ways that truly puts forward the **people**, most especially those who will be impacted by the policy. These three themes seek to capture their deepest yearnings of what could lead to a better life in the city.

#### **Decent and suitable employment remains the singular, persistent and most elusive aspiration of many newcomers**

The ability to work in a job that makes use of one's talents and skills and one that allows you to earn an income that tends to the needs of daily living seemed to elude many newcomers as well as those who have lived here for many years. The promise of immigration contradicts the realities of settlement and integration that breed underemployment and unemployment of racialized migrants. The multiple and layered impacts on migrants - inadequate housing options, food insecurity and family dysfunction - are expressed in data about the precarious physical and mental health of migrants.

While employment is a multi-jurisdiction and multi-sector responsibility, the City of Edmonton is the face on the ground among public institutions interacting with newcomers arriving in the city throughout the year. For one, the City stands out as one of the largest employers in Edmonton and therefore has the capacity and resources to lead and model promising ideas from those who are experiencing the impacts of underemployment and unemployment presented in this report. The City of Edmonton as a public institution committed to advancing social goals and the best interests of its citizens, it is an expectation that its residents will hold the City accountable for.

### **An urgent call to action and accountability to foster migrant newcomers' path to a sustainable and prosperous future in the city**

"We've waited long enough!" The racial equity and justice movement that has awed the world in the last two years is a pressing call for real action to tackle the roots of inequities. People are looking for the strongest commitment from the City that they genuinely value newcomers and migrants. A policy represents the highest level of collective commitment from the City and a gateway to actions and resources. It must embody clarity in its intention to change an inequitable system beyond addressing its cracks and margins and more importantly assign responsibilities and accountabilities.

Participants also spoke about **data for action** - data that exposes the disparities of access and outcomes for racialized migrants, becoming portals to meaningful solutions. In this way, outcomes can be monitored in truthful ways that will renew people's faith and belief in governments and institutions.

### **A strong and mutually reinforcing community-city partnership builds trust and confidence between community and municipality**

The strength of governments and institutions lies in how people have trust and confidence in those who serve them. Participants are looking at an approach beyond one-way consultations to authentic collaboration and co-development of solutions to address migrant challenges. It enjoins the City to have confidence in communities, valuing cultural ways of doing things and acknowledging ambiguity in embracing a relational approach. This is a first step to sharing power - a fundamental tenet of equity.

## **Policy Implications**

These core themes discussed earlier identified three broad areas of policy development to consider in the work to update the C529 Policy.

### **From economic integration to inclusive economy**

Economic integration, which is considered the bedrock of immigration policy and a core expectation of newcomers, has been fraught with problems with receiving cities as well as employers. The shift towards pinpointing systemic roots of migrant newcomers' disheartening economic outcomes suggests a just and equitable approach to equip cities with the vision, values and tools to welcome newcomers with dignity and respect.

*An inclusive economy is one in which there is expanded opportunity for more broadly shared prosperity especially for those facing the greatest barriers to advancing their well-being (Rockefeller Foundation).*

A primary principle of inclusive economy is that people are part of the equation of business decision making which means that conditions are created to achieve parity of opportunities for those with the most barriers. The municipality is the best arena by

which this can be done; it is the jurisdiction closest to the people. When you leave no one behind, the city benefits overall.



### **The continuum of inclusion: access, voice, control**

The inability of the city to reach migrant communities - from communicating about city services and programs to consulting them on city policies and decisions - presents an inclusion issue. It calls for a radical approach that moves beyond the traditional ways the City has been conducting public engagement. The City needs to address issues of access - how it uses its resources to open doors for migrants to feel welcome to express themselves; how it creates conditions by which their voices are meaningfully heard and how it is opening portals for sharing power to put people and community at the centre of decisions and actions.

### **Equitable and inclusive innovation starts with the people most impacted**

Great ideas come from people with lived experience! Their personal knowledge from direct experience enables ideas that matter most to them. These focus group discussions showed the wealth of potential and promising ideas for actions to improve their lives. Community members not only shared their experiences, highlighted barriers, but provided a spectrum of actions that fall under the City role and mandate, ways the City can address their challenges and with them, build a more inclusive city. These include, among others:

- Interactive, experiential and targeted learning support for newcomers seeking employment in the city for the first time rather than the traditional cookie cutter employment training
- Co-designing city programs and initiatives such as recreation and public engagement among others with migrant communities to incorporate culturally responsive ways and build relationships with them
- Migrants as cultural brokers and liaisons between the city and their communities to achieve effective communication and awareness

The City only needs to learn from them and let these ideas grow. A policy creates the conditions for inception and support.

Lastly, the challenge is for these ideas to blossom into real alternatives that can be embedded in a policy so that the work of welcoming newcomers in a city built on equity and justice can happen. It is possible and it is necessary.

## **A Revised and Updated C529 Policy**

We heard from the community that a public City commitment to advancing newcomer integration and success is needed at the highest level. We heard from City staff that a policy, that is City wide, provides a strong platform for all parts of the City to work together to support newcomers. A framework and strategy, while important, are strengthened by being grounded in a clear Council policy.

At a time when migration continues to grow and as newcomers arrive and settle in the city, they will meet the City's transit operators, police officers, 311 operators, front-desk staff at our recreation centres, attractions and libraries. Behind the scenes are city staff who will look at their resumes in job applications at the city, the public engagement advisors figuring out how to best reach migrant communities and many others who are not visible to many newcomers but whose decisions will directly impact them. They all need to be guided by a policy that values newcomers beyond their economic contributions and their cultural and social wealth. More importantly, a policy institutes coordinated, intentional and focused efforts directed at changing mindsets, initiating actions and monitoring outcomes for migrants to experience equity in the city.

A revised and updated C529 Policy needs an overhaul to update and refresh it to make it relevant in language, concepts/principles, and identify key areas of policy direction. This will provide a foundation for City initiatives that create the conditions for migrants to thrive in Edmonton. It needs to include a recommendation for a locus of responsibility and a stewardship structure, one that reflects the whole of the corporation and may incorporate a link to newcomer community voices so essential to an equity approach.

## **Emerging Guiding Principles**

### **1. Intentionality**

Intentionality is a mindset that directs actions to achieve the policy goal with clarity and purpose. The updated C529 policy ensures that populations impacted by the policy are described in their intersectional identities, the barriers they experienced and benefits from the policy.

### **2. Sharing Power**

Sharing power means that those who have been historically marginalised from decisions that affect them have opportunities to participate in the decision-making process. The updated C529 policy will provide guidance and support to engender and nurture participation of populations impacted in the development, implementation and evaluation of the policy.

### **3. Equity Framing**

Disaggregated data has the power to make visible patterns of inequalities that can be obscured by aggregated data. The updated C529 policy will identify support for the collection and analysis of data disaggregated by intersectional identities to reveal differences in experience and outcomes.

### **4. Civic Participation and Citizenship**

Civic participation is least experienced by migrants, especially newcomers, yet

an essential part of having a sense of belonging and inclusion in their new homeland. The updated C529 Policy will create opportunities and reduce barriers to engage them in intercultural and equitable ways.

#### **5. Acknowledgement of Cultural Wealth of Migrant Newcomers**

The City values the social and cultural wealth that migrants contribute to enriching Edmonton. The updated C529 policy will foster and support practices in programs and initiatives that demonstrate how the City harnesses the multiple dimensions of migrants.

### **Policy Directions: Recommendations**

The recommended policy directions have been largely shaped by the insights from the community and City staff and informed by a scan of approaches to immigration and settlement advanced by other Canadian cities. Newcomer frameworks and language, as well as equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression concepts, are emerging across these cities to frame and advance this work. Municipalities such as Winnipeg, Vancouver and Calgary all have welcoming newcomer policies and frameworks.<sup>15</sup> All these policies reflect that a whole-of-city approach is key, as work to include newcomers needs to cut across the entire municipality led by a coordinating central office.

#### **#1 Inclusive Economy: leaving no one behind**

Inclusive economy builds on the Economic Integration policy area in C529 and represents a shift towards pinpointing systemic roots of migrant newcomers' disheartening economic outcomes. It suggests a just and equitable approach to equip cities with the vision, values and tools to welcome newcomers with dignity and respect.

The City of Edmonton provides the foundations for this policy shift through the Edmonton's Economic Action Plan (EAP) 2021 which is a 10 year road map to build a vibrant, inclusive and sustainable economy and is a direct outcome of Edmonton's visionary 30 year City Plan. It features building Edmonton's economic growth in an equitable and inclusive way, using an equity/GBA+ lens to account for the disproportionate and systemic barriers and challenges encountered by many newcomers and other equity-seeking groups.

#### **The City role and potential actions resulting from an updated C529 policy**

While immigration helps grow and sustain our cities, once here newcomers need opportunities that others take for granted to participate, thrive and belong. Inclusive Economy as a policy direction touches on the work of multiple City Departments, reflecting the intersecting nature of this issue, as well as the powerful role the City

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<sup>15</sup> A Newcomer Welcome and Inclusion Policy and Strategic Framework (2020 (Winnipeg), A Welcoming City Strategy 2022 (Victoria), Calgary's Welcoming Community Policy (2011)

itself can model as an inclusive and equitable employer. A few key city-wide areas of action include:

- *Newcomer Business/ Entrepreneurial Support and Outreach* - supporting racialized entrepreneurs and newcomers (Action #3, EAP)
- *Sustainable Procurement* - hiring those who face barriers to employment such as newcomers, creating training and employment opportunities and also buying from newcomer and diverse owned businesses (Action #4, EAP)
- *Child Care* - advocating for options that improve workers' access to child care as a way of reducing employment barriers (Action #17, EAP)
- *Growing an Inclusive Diverse City Workforce* - intentionally focusing on recruiting a more diverse workforce that reflects the city's diversity at all staffing levels, as well as tapping into its huge organisational capacity to offer needed newcomer internships, student practicums and placements.

Inclusive economy is central to an updated C529 Policy to ensure that the actions impacting newcomers are implemented and outcomes monitored. With its touch points across most City departments with initiatives, the policy direction **Inclusive Economy** has significant potential to benefit newcomers and is integral in advancing an inclusive recovery and a future where all belong.

## **#2 Service Access and Equity: critical link between people and systems**

As a service provider the municipality has a mandate to support equal access to migrants to the broad range of services that impact all aspects of daily life - from transit and leisure services, to adequate, affordable housing, employment, neighbourhood services and more. City programs, services and facilities that are so essential to all aspects of newcomer integration and belonging must be equitably available to all migrants and newcomers in Edmonton.<sup>16,17</sup> Of equally great importance, however, is that the City design and deliver these services with equity in mind and in a culturally responsive way.

### **The City role and potential actions resulting from an updated C529 policy**

- *Learning , Skills Building and Adapting City Services*  
In order to achieve service access and equity, the City needs to ensure that migrants' needs are deeply understood so city staff can look at City services and programs through a new lens, adapting them in creative ways to meet the

<sup>16</sup> Toronto's Newcomer Strategy 2022-26 calls for development and use of Newcomer Access Plans as tools to help City departments identify and assess significant barriers for newcomers, outlining specific actions and measurement of progress. The aim, improving newcomer access to City services and wellbeing.

<sup>17</sup> The City of Toronto adopted the Integrating Cities Charter in 2014 as one facet of the Toronto Newcomer Strategy. The Charter requires the municipal government to provide equal opportunities for all residents, to integrate migrants and to embrace the diversity of the local population.

needs of newcomers<sup>18</sup>. Deep skills building of City staff in intercultural awareness and anti racism will equip City staff to design and deliver services in an equitable, welcoming and culturally responsive manner. A newcomer policy framework and implementation plan is needed to ensure that intercultural and racial equity skills is an expectation among all City staff.<sup>19</sup>

- *Developing Clear, Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Communications*  
There is no belonging without access. But access alone falls short if newcomers don't know services exist or are challenged to navigate complex City processes. This is where equitable access intersects with the need for the City to reach out proactively to newcomers. By building relationships with ethnocultural communities the City can develop creative, culturally appropriate communications. This may involve multilingual approaches and use of new technology and diverse cultural platforms to share information about City services with newcomers.
- *Implementing Access without Fear Policy*  
People with precarious immigration status may be fearful of any interactions with government officials and may hesitate to access services from the City. The Access Without Fear policy (2018) is meant to ensure all residents can access City of Edmonton support and services without being questioned about their immigration status. While City service reviews have been carried out, undocumented individuals may still fear accessing needed services. Incorporating this policy consideration into the revised C529 Policy will bring the full attention, staff training and implementation oversight needed to continue to support undocumented residents.

### **#3 Civic Participation and Communications: we all have a voice**

Civic Participation and Communications is a key policy direction central to building an inclusive and equitable community.<sup>20</sup>

*Civic engagement* still remains a big gap in migrants' journey to inclusion. While immigrants value social connectedness as integral to their culture, their connection to the formal system in terms of participating in the civic affairs of the municipality is limited. Available studies reveal low participation rates in volunteering, voting and public engagement among ethnocultural communities.<sup>21</sup> The City's Public Engagement

<sup>18</sup> Calgary's Welcoming Community Policy (2011) outlines a blueprint for enhancing the lives of immigrants in Calgary by identifying how the City can better serve their distinct needs. It also has a Welcoming Community Corporate Plan and Advisory Table.

<sup>19</sup> Part of Winnipeg's Newcomer Welcome and Inclusion Policy (2020) involves training the public service "on anti-oppression, including anti-racism and cross-cultural competency," according to the policy.

<sup>20</sup> Calgary has a robust welcoming web portal for newcomers with resources including multilingual versions of a Calgary Newcomers Guide. In 2021 it adopted Standards for Equitable Communications and Engagement including a Multicultural Strategy for Communications and Engagement.

<sup>21</sup> Gunn, K. & Ortiz I. Integrated Lived Experience and Policy Report. March 2021.

Policy C593 (2017) includes “Inclusive and Accessible” as a key approach to reach diverse communities to “ensure people feel heard and know their input is valued....inviting citizens to play a larger role in shaping their community and enabling social and economic growth.”

*City of Edmonton Communications* aims to provide public information, effective communication and research that supports successful settlement and has the power to promote a welcoming, inclusive municipal and public climate for newcomers and migrants in Edmonton.

### **The City role and potential actions resulting from an updated C529 policy**

Of all three orders of government, the City has a crucial role to play when it comes to the inclusion and active engagement of migrants and newcomers. It is the arena with the most influence in breaking down barriers, exploring new tools and ways to engage and promote active civic participation. This policy direction, Civic Participation and Communications, holds great promise for enhanced involvement and connection with newcomers and migrants as the City explores with them new tools, platforms and creative approaches that advance equity, welcoming and sharing power:

- Establish an intentional culture of inclusion and welcome with a strong City web newcomer welcome portal, providing updated multilingual translations of the Newcomer Guide and videos, and ensuring City staff have the resources and skills needed to engage in a culturally responsive way.
- Continue to embed a fulsome GBA+ process in all City work and engagement, centering lived experience and insights of racialized residents and newcomers. This will inform City decision making, help better understand and break down systemic barriers newcomers face, and engage them meaningfully in all stages of City work.
- Foster a culture of innovation by exploring human centred design approaches and equity-centred engagement to decolonize processes of power sharing. Support multiple ways of knowing and people-centred decision-making and ensure racialized Edmontonians have a voice.
- Building on the successful equity-focused Election 2021 efforts of the Office of the City Clerk to reach out to newcomers and other diverse Edmontonians, develop a Newcomer City 101 Course, designed as an introduction to the role of the City, how it works and how to have a voice in City decision making<sup>22</sup>.

### **#4 Data for Action: equity framing in describing disparities and reporting outcomes**

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<sup>22</sup> A Welcoming City Strategy (2022) was inspired by international Welcoming Standards that outline seven key areas of focus for a community to be welcoming for newcomers. Overseen by the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, this Strategy includes plans for a Newcomer Classroom Program about City roles and services.

Data can move decision makers and policy makers to action most especially if these data reveal disparities among population groups indicating an urgent call to action. There is enthusiasm and readiness among City staff to learn about how data can be effectively used to reduce barriers and improve access to programs and services. Community leaders also yearn for data that genuinely reflects their context and realities and in effect becoming their voice to influence change.

This policy direction is needed to encourage, support and grow initial efforts to collect disaggregated data with an intentional focus on population groups as identified in the GBA+ analysis. It is critical for the City to explore and improve its capacity regarding data collection related to equity-seeking groups, including newcomers. It is so crucial that it is highlighted in the Anti-Racism Strategy and the Community Safety and Well Being Plan. Race-based data collection and analysis is trending across cities and best practices in this area are well developed for policy makers across sectors.<sup>23</sup>

### **The City role and potential actions resulting from an updated C529 policy**

Data is important for all cities and critical in this context of racial inequities. This policy direction can breed a set of actions that can only strengthen the City's work in addressing newcomers needs in particular and tackling racism by:

- Creating equity-centred data sets to better understand how city's demographics are changing and determine evolving priorities;
- Designing a tool to assess the state of equity in the city based on how well our diverse populations participate in its economic vitality, contribute to its readiness for the future, and connect to its assets and resources;
- Building a compelling narrative and shared understanding about why - and how much - equity matters; and
- Creating a people-centred lens, with an emphasis on newcomers to inform the development of policies, plans, strategies, business models, and investments to advance equitable growth.

### **#5 Neighbourhood Inclusion: places and spaces for a welcoming experience**

The ultimate destination for newcomers are the neighbourhoods where they will live, learn and play. It's in neighbourhoods where they will first experience acceptance through joyful connections, freedom and safety to take a walk in their streets and a feeling of comfort and peace in their homes. Community participants spoke about their fears and anxiety from the time they first arrived and most recently hate incidents in their neighbourhoods.

Neighbourhoods are arenas where cultural differences meet, collide, are navigated and mediated through welcoming public facilities and spaces. This policy direction

<sup>23</sup> National Equity Atlas. [<https://nationalequityatlas.org/about-the-atlas#us>]; We all Count. [<https://weallcount.com/about-us/>]

intends to guide the design and development of neighbourhood spaces by ensuring that local facilities are safe and accessible, encourage intercultural interaction in the community and facilitate diverse cultural expressions.

### **The City role and potential actions resulting from an updated C529 policy**

The City has made great strides in its neighbourhood-focused Abundant Communities Edmonton and has immense potential in the future neighbourhood planning initiatives. They can showcase what it means to include a newcomer perspective and an equity lens in growing Abundant Communities and in the design of the neighbourhoods. The updated C529 Policy can equip city staff with an equity framework and tools by which they can:

- Design and conduct community engagement that includes the perspective of newcomers and racialized migrants
- Identify challenges and barriers to community cohesion and inclusion experienced by migrants in their neighbourhood and enable them to find responsive solutions
- Create collaborative processes and mechanisms that will give voice and participation by those often marginalised from the planning process
- Acknowledge and utilise the vast cultural wealth of migrant residents, including their cultural and historical identities, in the planning and design of local facilities and amenities

The outcome from such actions emanating from a policy can only foster trust among the migrant residents and the City, encourage transparency and fairness in decision-making and advance collaborative and power-sharing networks.

### **#6 Leadership: opening doors to new possibilities**

Leadership<sup>2425</sup> as a key policy direction spans the whole of the City, and is integral to and needs to be modelled across all the other five policy directions : Inclusive

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<sup>24</sup> Welcoming Cities Australia Standard identifies Leadership as the first of six categories, in its standards guide that addresses how members of the Welcoming Cities Network advance cultural diversity and inclusive policies and practices.

[https://welcomingcities.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/WelcomingCitiesStandard\\_June2019\\_web.pdf](https://welcomingcities.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/WelcomingCitiesStandard_June2019_web.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Winnipeg's Welcome and Inclusion Policy 2020 identifies City leadership in these areas: A Welcoming City, A City without Racism, Equitable and Accessible Services, a Representative Workforce and Active Implementation. [Newcomer Welcome and Inclusion Policy - Community Services - City of Winnipeg](#)



## Economy, Service Equity and Access, Civic Participation and Communications, Places and Spaces and Data for Action.

The evolving roles of municipalities include those of policy maker, community investor, convenor and facilitator, service provider, employer and buyer of goods. In each area, the City has the opportunity to model fresh citizen-centred approaches to leadership that help build an inclusive, welcoming and equitable community with newcomers. Underpinning all of this, however, is the need, as leader, to support front-line City leadership at all levels to power a mindset shift around migrants as city makers. As it strives to build a workforce that reflects the increasingly diverse communities it serves, the City can advance a new civic leadership model, mobilising newcomers and ethnocultural communities as valued partners in city building.

### **The City role and potential actions resulting from an updated C529 policy**

The City increasingly sees itself as a central player in the growing Edmonton Metropolitan Region. It can play a pivotal role by committing to an equity focused approach to working with newcomers and migrants itself and to advocating for change to other orders of government. It can use this remarkable convening power and its networked relationships to bring diverse collective voices forward for change, exploring solutions beyond traditional, limited jurisdictions.

- Identify and resource a corporate leadership and information hub around migrants and newcomers at the City. With accountability for stewarding the C529 policy and subsequent city wide newcomer frameworks and action plans, this internal hub will report regularly on the City's progress across all policy areas.
- Explore options to ensure strong migrant/newcomer community voices inform the C529 governance and oversight model and are also connected to the City leadership hub. This includes exploring with the ELIP collaborative partners how to leverage and link their emerging research expertise, strategic leadership and grassroots voices to this City focus on newcomers.
- Advocate more effectively to other orders of government about critical issues, resources and needed changes to support newcomers. An equity-minded approach to the City's work with newcomers and migrants will provide a foundation for more effective advocacy, shaped by newcomer voices and informed by richer data.
- Prioritise further reflection and dialogue on the link between the City's work with migrants and newcomers and its commitment to advance reconciliation with Indigenous communities.

*Inclusion does not happen accidentally; it takes intention, it takes resolution and it takes leadership. Leadership to realize that a city that works for everyone must include everyone. ~ Senator Ratna Omidvar, Building Inclusive Cities.*

## Next Steps

We heard from the people who will be most impacted by an updated C529 policy. Whether they are migrants who are striving to be their very best to survive and thrive in this city, City of Edmonton staff imbued with the best interests of the people they serve or leaders from civic agencies and organisations inspired by community sentiments and hopes, there is one urgent call. They are looking to the City of Edmonton as the jurisdiction closest to them to make a commitment at its highest level of decision-making to acknowledge their role in welcoming, supporting and valuing migrants in the city.

The City has a valuable contribution to make in tackling the chronic, persistent challenges that have plagued many newcomers for more than half a decade since immigrants arrived in Edmonton. A commitment began in 2007 when C529 was first adopted. Now it is time to move forward with vigour and vigilance to update a stronger and equity-focused C529 to pave the way for confronting systemic impediments and embracing new ways of solution-seeking.

The next steps are to draft an updated people-informed C529 Policy and then seek approval from Edmonton City Council of the updated policy, accompanied by a clear stewardship and accountability centre. The next rendition of the policy should move beyond an institutional language of immigration and settlement to a people-centred expression of newcomers, inclusion and equity.

It's time for a serious shift. It's time to reflect, reframe, reshape and reiterate the City commitment to newcomers in Edmonton. It's time to work together with communities in new ways to create inclusive, equitable and welcoming conditions for migrants to fully participate and thrive in Edmonton.

***Leaders engage people and build inclusive solutions.  
They foster innovative ideas and open doors to possibility.  
To be a civic leader is to be on the cutting edge of transformational change  
that creates a better future.***

*~ Susan McIsaac, Former President and CEO United Way of Toronto*

## APPENDICES

1. C529 Policy - Immigration and Settlement Policy
2. Backgrounder Research Highlights, March 2022

### Companion Documents to this Report

1. **Working Towards Equity: What We Heard from City of Edmonton Staff**
2. **Our Voices: Engaging Migrants On Belonging And Inclusion**

## C529 Policy - Immigration and Settlement Policy



# CITY POLICY

**REFERENCE:**

New Policy

**POLICY NUMBER: C529**

**ADOPTED BY:**

City Council  
22 May 2007

**SUPERSEDES:**

**New**

**PREPARED BY:** Corporate Services

**DATE:** 8 May 2007

**TITLE:** Immigration and Settlement

Page 1 of 2

**Policy Statements:**

The City of Edmonton is committed to a municipal environment that attracts and retains immigrants, refugees and their families. To this end the City of Edmonton commits to action in seven key policy areas.

**Economic Integration**

The City of Edmonton promotes full integration of newcomers within Edmonton's economic mainstream.

**Intergovernmental Relations**

The City of Edmonton will engage other orders of government in order to participate in formal discussions and decision-making related to immigration policy and program development that potentially impacts Edmonton.

The City of Edmonton will seek partnerships with other orders of government in order to access funding for projects that address mutual objectives in the area of immigration and settlement.

**Service Access and Equity**

As a support to successful settlement, City of Edmonton programs and services will continue to be made accessible to newcomers.



# CITY POLICY

Page 2 of 2

## **Planning and Co-ordination**

To ensure corporate coherence, City of Edmonton immigrant policies and programs will be consistent with and contribute to the achievement of Diversity and Inclusion Framework goals. In so doing, the City will support inter-departmental and inter-governmental collaboration.

## **Communication, Public Awareness and Education**

The City of Edmonton will provide public information, effective communication, staff development and research that supports successful settlement and promotes a welcoming and positive municipal and public climate for immigrants.

## **Community Building and Inclusion**

The City of Edmonton will encourage and support immigrant and refugee communities' participation in all aspects of municipal life.

## **Immigrant Women**

Given particular vulnerabilities and challenges faced by some immigrant women, City of Edmonton programs and services will be responsive to their issues and needs.

**The purpose of this policy is to** enable the City, within its mandate as municipal government and service provider, to work with all other orders of government; economic, social and cultural institutions; and immigrants to attract newcomers and provide support to enable immigrants to develop a sense of identity, belonging and full participation in the social, economic, cultural and political life of Edmonton.

## APPENDIX 2

## Backgrounder Research Highlights, March 2022

### Introduction

In August 2021, [Belonging: Stories of the Dignity and Resilience of Immigrants](#) was presented to Edmonton City Council, the first of a series of five annual reports on the State of Immigration and Settlement (SIS) in Edmonton.

The 2021 SIS Report also flagged opportunities for new approaches and policy change in Edmonton. One priority action identified was the need to review and update the City's 2007 Immigration and Settlement Policy C529. The Policy Review Backgrounder sets the stage for the review and update of Policy C529 Immigration and Settlement directed by Edmonton City Council to be completed by fall 2022.

**This Highlights document includes a selection of the key components of the full Policy C529 Policy Review Backgrounder.**

### The Current State: Statistics, COVID and Trends

Edmonton has enjoyed an accelerated growth in new immigrant arrivals since 2000 that has significantly changed the city's demographic landscape<sup>26</sup>. About a third of the city's one million population have ethnic origins other than European and speak over 125 languages. The new arrivals bring a wealth of talents and skills across different categories of immigration: skilled workers, refugees, family, students and temporary foreign workers.

#### Pandemic Impacts

The pandemic has had, and will continue to have, a significant impact on society and the economy, along with a disproportionate negative impact on the successful integration of newcomers in both Edmonton and Canada. These impacts include<sup>27</sup>:

- Decrease in the percentage of population growing from international migrants from a record high of 85% in 2019 to 68% in 2020 particularly among non-permanent residents, student and work permit holders.
- Lockdown measures resulted in loss of employment for many newcomers and racialized Canadians who work in high contact settings.
- Hate crimes rose by 37% in 2020 of which 60% were motivated by race or ethnicity, targeting Black, Asian and Indigenous communities.

The impacts of COVID can have enduring effects and influence the social and economic mobility of migrant newcomers and younger families.

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<sup>26</sup> For details, please see State of Immigration and Settlement in Edmonton - Annual Report 2021. City of Edmonton.

<sup>27</sup> [Discrimination before and since the start of the pandemic \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)

## Persistent and Chronic Systemic Issues Impacting Migrants in Edmonton

While the legacy of the COVID pandemic looms in the present and future, there are enduring systemic issues that are still adversely impacting a successful pathway for newcomers in the city. These issues reflect the intersections of race, ethnicity, age and gender and how they work to create conditions of disadvantage and vulnerability when systems and institutions fail to recognize and acknowledge them as factors hampering migrant advancement.

The most recent report by the Edmonton Community Foundation<sup>28</sup> in 2021 revealed the following:

- Edmontonians who are visible minorities had a higher unemployment rate (9.1%) than non-visible minorities (8.4%) although they have a higher level of education
- Black Edmontonians had the highest unemployment rate at 13.9%
- Visible minority individuals in Alberta had lower proportions of apprenticeships and trades accreditation
- One-third of employed visible minorities with a disability said that their work does not give them the opportunity to use all of their education, skills, or work experience
- Close to a fourth of visible minority women and girls live in poverty. The poverty rate of senior immigrant women is 22.6%

Canada-wide research reveals that racialized minorities and immigrants experience greater unemployment and underemployment collectively, but immigrant women are hit the hardest as they account for more employment losses than men. Entrepreneurial skill is one of the many talents that migrants bring to the city. It is reported that recent immigrants are more likely to start a business.

## An Inclusive Economy

There is no doubt that COVID has amplified the inequality that has already existed in our society, such that the call for equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities is a logical proposition to uplift population groups who have been left behind from growth and prosperity.

*An inclusive economy is one in which there is expanded opportunity for more broadly shared prosperity especially for those facing the greatest barriers to advancing their well-being (Rockefeller Foundation).*

An inclusive economy provides spaces and opportunities for newcomers to participate fully as workers, consumers and business owners; creates supports and removes barriers to economic participation; and includes overall wellbeing beyond economic outputs as measures of true prosperity in a stable and sustainable environment.

The City of Edmonton is looking for ways to spur economic growth and to create 120,000 jobs

<sup>28</sup> [FINAL-VT\\_Intersection.pdf \(ecfoundation.org\)](#) and [FINAL-2021-VT\\_SmBusiness\\_v7.pdf \(ecfoundation.org\)](#)

in the next ten years. Any focus on economic recovery needs to be driven by the value of equity and incorporate a GBA+ lens to address racial, gender and other systemic social inequities. This recovery plan must ensure that no Edmontonian, regardless of their income, age, gender, immigration status, disability, race, sexual orientation or other identity factors must determine their chances to thrive and prosper in the city.

### **No One Left Behind**

Building the strongest and most resilient economy possible requires careful attention to who is included and who is being left behind in our considerations and policies. [Edmonton's Economic Action Plan \(2021\)](#) used an equity/GBA+ lens to account for the disproportionate and systemic barriers and challenges some Edmontonians continue to face. Not all Edmontonians, including newcomers and immigrants, have had the same opportunities for growth and prosperity.

*“Incorporating equity measures in the planning and implementation of economic actions for some segments of the population in the city to address racial, gender and other systemic social inequalities, ensures more equitable and inclusive economic opportunities for all Edmontonians to prosper.” (Economic Action Plan, 11)*

### **Child Care to Remove Barriers**

Supporting and advocating for options that improve workers' access to child care is also an important action in the EAPlan (p30). Action 17 calls for the City to “Promote affordable, accessible, high-quality, and inclusive early learning and child care.”<sup>29</sup> It notes that accessible and affordable child care is one of the key ways to remove barriers to employment and labour force participation, especially for racialized single-parents and women who tend to be the most significantly impacted. Systemic, coordinated, and equity-based solutions are required to meet the needs of the city's diverse and expanding population.

## **The Municipal Role in Immigration and Settlement**

***Migration and urbanization were two dominant and intersecting trends of the 20th century, and they continue to grow in impact in the 21st century.*** Urban centres now are home to over half the world's population. People move to cities for economic success, learning, entertainment and family settlement, as well as refuge from violent situations in their home country.

***Municipalities are on the frontlines of immigration, settlement and inclusion.*** Their proximity to citizens and their capacity to act rapidly - as seen during the COVID 19 pandemic - are their great strengths. Municipal governments provide essential services that impact day-to-day living, and exert their influence in many ways, as employers, providers of goods and services, as wealth creators and policy-makers. As they respond to demographic changes including those resulting from migration, municipalities also are in the forefront of confronting discrimination and racism.

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<sup>29</sup> Source: [Edmonton Economic Action Plan](#)



**While immigration helps grow and sustain our cities, once here newcomers need opportunities that others take for granted to participate, thrive and belong.** Cities play an important role in many areas fundamental to belonging and inclusion: employment, education, transportation, civic participation, access to services, housing and community connection. These are pivotal in determining whether or not migrants and newcomers can truly call a city home.

**Cities can't do it all alone - they need to collaborate and advocate for impact with others.** The pathways to integration involve a collective process involving all sectors in the community as well as different levels of government. Although cities are the first point of contact for newcomer needs, cities have no formal role or mandate and lack the resources and revenue tools needed to provide direct immigrant support services.

Municipal governments are hampered in their impact on integration, however, by an outdated property system tax and limited fiscal tools, as they are left collecting only eight cents of every tax dollar. Advocacy to other orders of government who hold the levers of change, and the recognition of municipalities as key partners in this work, will enhance intergovernmental coordination and yield improved outcomes around inclusion.<sup>30</sup>

Cities like Edmonton have stepped up and taken on responsibilities to become key partners in the immigrant and settlement journey. The City has made attraction and retention of newcomers a priority, realising that a diverse municipality means a vibrant and robust city.

Acknowledging that a municipality can exert life-changing influences in critical areas of newcomer integration through policy and action, the City of Edmonton adopted its C529 Immigration and Settlement Policy in 2007. It defined at that time the role and responsibility of the City in fostering and supporting seven key areas for newcomer integration within the context of the municipality. In a similar vein, the current C529 Policy Review and Refresh will bring a fresh leadership lens to the revision of this policy, reflecting the growing awareness of the powerful and multidimensional role the City plays in the areas of immigration, integration and social inclusion.

## Policy Scan on Immigration and Settlement: A critical first step

The Policy Review and Update of C529 will be informed by an overview of the approaches to immigration and settlement advanced by other Canadian municipalities, and by a high-level review of some key City of Edmonton plans, policies and initiatives that will underpin the City's commitment to immigration and settlement.

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<sup>30</sup> Toolkit for Inclusive Municipalities, <http://citiesofmigration.ca> and [http://citiesofmigration.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Municipal\\_Report\\_Main\\_Report2.pdf](http://citiesofmigration.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Municipal_Report_Main_Report2.pdf)

## **High-Level Scan of Leading Municipal Policies and Practices**

A high-level scan and summary of leading policies and practices regarding immigration, settlement and newcomers in municipalities provides a cursory snapshot of the diverse ways in which Canadian municipalities, including Edmonton, have attempted to address the needs of newcomers and immigrants in their cities.

Municipal roles and leadership on this front continue to change rapidly and learn and grow in response to community expectations, new arrivals of refugees to Canada post-2016, and to growing consensus in support of systems change, equity and anti-racism.

## **Other Municipal Approaches**

The C529 Policy Review has been informed by a review of the approaches to immigration and settlement advanced by other Canadian cities. Municipal roles and leadership on this front continue to evolve in response to community expectations, new arrivals of refugees to Canada post-2016, and growing community calls for systems change grounded in equity and anti-racism.

Four common threads featured in municipal work with newcomers include:

- Newcomer frameworks and language, as well as equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression concepts and Offices, are emerging across these cities to frame and advance this work around newcomers at the municipal level.
- A whole-of-city approach is key, as work to include newcomers needs to cut across the entire municipality led by a coordinating central office.
- Many Canadian municipalities, including Edmonton, have seen multi-year investment by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to mobilize Local Immigration Partnerships around grassroots initiatives and planning. ( See below)
- Most cities work with a variety of community driven leadership tables or committees that ensure migrant and ethnocultural perspectives inform decisions.

While stand-alone policies and plans on immigration and settlement of newcomers are critical, a more recent trend is that of embedding inclusion, anti-racism and equity strongly across the broad swath of municipal work - from transportation to housing, from building strong neighbourhoods, to recruitment and the economy.

## **Local Immigration Partnerships**

Many Canadian cities, including Edmonton, have taken the opportunity in the past few years to access federal funds from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to establish Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP). Their aim is to develop a local settlement strategy as well as to:

- Engage cross-sector partners in fostering welcoming communities through collaboration, innovation and systemic change;
- Raise awareness around newcomers' needs and experiences of integration;
- Support community-level research and strategic planning; and
- Improve accessibility and coordination of services that facilitate immigrant settlement and integration.

Edmonton's Local Immigration Partnership (ELIP) is in its third year of a 5-year federally funded project and is a partner in the work on the Settlement and Immigration SIS Report with the City contributing time and staff resources. Africa Centre, ECVO (Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organisations), FRAP (Francophonie Albertaine Plurielle) and MFRS (Multicultural Family Resource Society) along with the City form the guiding shared Secretariat. Edmonton's LIP aims to be participatory, people-centred, and to consider power dynamics. Its goal is to provide the means by which innovative partnerships can address specific needs in the community related to settlement, immigration and inclusion.

### **City of Edmonton: A High-Level Overview of Relevant Policies and Frameworks**

The Review of the Immigration and Settlement Policy C529 must be seen and explored against the context of a broad web of City policies, decisions, plans and initiatives. The years since 2017 have seen the emergence and evolution of a number of new City of Edmonton strategic plans, policies and initiatives that have implications and relevance for the C529 Policy Review and Update in 2022. While some predate the COVID 19 pandemic, others emerged in response to the pandemic challenges and strong community movements for change around equity and inclusion.

A clearly changing trajectory of approach can be seen in these documents, reflecting increasing shifts in awareness and understanding, as well as the complex and all-important language around diversity, inclusion and equity. The lists below represent a selection of recent City policies and plans that are important as context for the C529 Policy Review and Update. This Review will dive more deeply into current and planned policies, programs and initiatives relevant to immigration and settlement as part of the engagement with City staff from across the corporation.

#### A. Overarching City Policies and Plans

- City Plan
- ConnectEdmonton
- Public Engagement Policy and Framework
- Access to Municipal Services without Fear
- Edmonton Economic Action Plan
- EndPovertyEdmonton Strategy and Framework
- The Art of Inclusion Framework- Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Corporate Policy Framework
- Affordable Housing Strategy and Investment Plan
- Sustainable Procurement Policy

#### B. Recent Key City Policies/Initiatives

- Zoning Bylaw Review and GBA+ and Equity Toolkit
- Anti-Racism Strategy and Community Safety and Well Being Strategy
- New Corporate Diversity and Inclusion or Equity Policy (in development)
- EIRC Grant Program Revision
- Community Safety and Well Being Action Plan
- Corporate Translation/Multilingual Framework

- Newcomer Housing Project

## Conclusion:

The central role played by the City of Edmonton in supporting the transition from “immigrant” to “community member” addresses the essence of integration, social inclusion, equity and belonging. The City’s role is grounded in fostering and nurturing social inclusion and enhancing the social and economic well-being of the city and of all Edmontonians.

The importance of people-informed policy cannot be overemphasised. The 2021 SIS Report highlighted how systems, policy and people intersect. People are the place to start. Engaging those who are impacted the most by policies reveals barriers to well-being created by systems and opens spaces for people to be part of the solutions. Through the C529 policy review, the City can invite and demonstrate how newcomers can truly help shape and co-create policy and new approaches to building a more equitable and inclusive city.

The C529 Policy Review has the potential to provide a strong policy grounding for the City’s work to advance an inclusive economy and recovery. The full Backgrounder document, April 2022, outlines in more detail the current context for this work. It will help inform the next phase of the Policy Review and Update through the use of an equity-based assessment, broad engagement of City staff and centring perspectives and expertise of newcomer community members. These Highlights provide a snapshot of key elements of the full Backgrounder.