

UPDATES TO CITY POLICY C529 IMMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

Recommendation

That Community and Public Services Committee recommend to City Council:

That the updated City Policy C529A Migrant Inclusion, as set out in Attachment 2 of the November 25, 2024, Community Service report CS00789, be approved.

Requested Action	Committee decision required		
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	Healthy City		
City Plan Values	BELONG		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	Inclusive and compassionate	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	Community safety and well-being
Corporate Business Plan	Serving Edmontonians		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Policy C529 - Immigration and Settlement • City Policy 606 - Access without Fear to Municipal Services • State of Immigration and Settlement Report • C538 Diversity and Inclusion Policy • City of Edmonton's Anti-Racism Strategy • Community Safety and Well Being Strategy • Art of Inclusion: Our Diversity and Inclusion Framework • Edmonton's Economic Action Plan • Corporate Accessibility Plan • Indigenous Framework 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 31, 2023, Community Services report CS01818, The Annual State of Immigration and Settlement - Year 2 Report • November 21, 2022, Community Services report CS00788, Refugee and Newcomer Housing Project Update • August 25, 2021, Citizen Services report CR_7220, State of Immigration and Settlement in Edmonton 		

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- October 16, 2019, Citizen Services report CR_7520, Programs to Settle and Support Syrian Refugees in Edmonton
- September 12, 2018, Citizen Services report CR_5138, Access without Fear to Municipal Services

Previous Council/Committee Action

On August 25, 2021, City Council passed the following motions:

1. Build on the foundation and concepts of the year one report in future annual reports on the State of Immigration and Settlement in Edmonton;
2. Provide a progress report on the status of the proposed Refugee/Newcomer Housing Project and;
3. 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.

On May 31, 2023, Community and Public Services Committee passed the following motion:

1. That Administration provide an updated policy on immigration and settlement in alignment with relevant intersecting policies and engagement with newcomer communities to a future Committee meeting.

Executive Summary

- Migrants are essential for Edmonton's growth and development, providing economic, social and cultural benefits.
- While immigration is primarily a federal and provincial responsibility, municipalities play a crucial frontline role in integrating newcomers. As the initial point of contact for essential services, they need strong partnerships with other governments and community organizations to effectively support Edmontonians.
- As the City prepares for its population to reach two million, Administration has drafted an updated City Policy C529A - Migrant Inclusion to address changing demographics and rapid population growth, based on a jurisdictional scan and community engagement. This includes six areas of focus: Inclusive Economy, Service Access and Equity, Neighborhood Inclusion, Accessible Communication and Civic Engagement, Data for Action and Leadership in Advocacy and Implementation.
- To implement the updated City Policy C529, Administration proposes developing a Migrant Action Plan, which will include a needs assessment, corporate action plan, community partner plan, evaluation process and a funding review.

REPORT

Migrants¹ are essential for Edmonton's growth and development, providing economic, social and cultural benefits. As Edmonton's migrant population continues to expand, Administration has a unique opportunity to champion policies and practices that not only welcome migrants but also actively leverage their diverse skills, perspectives and talents which are crucial for community building and economic development.

Edmonton Context

The first iteration of City Policy C529 - Immigration and Settlement was adopted in 2007 to empower Administration to work alongside its intergovernmental and community partners to attract and retain migrants while promoting their full participation in all aspects of life in Edmonton.

According to the Federal Census Subdivision data from 2021, 32.5 per cent of Edmonton's population are immigrants. This figure includes individuals who were admitted to Canada on or before May 11, 2021². A proportion exceeded by only three of Canada's major cities: Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary³. This trend highlights the city's attractiveness and success in attracting and retaining migrants, which is crucial for sustaining economic growth and addressing labour shortages. According to the Edmonton CMA Economic Profile, Edmonton saw a 46 per cent increase in immigrant workers between 2011 and 2021, with immigrants comprising 30 per cent of the city's workforce in 2021.

Edmonton is also home to undocumented individuals and refugee claimants who may not be captured in population data. In recent years, the City has also responded to several international humanitarian crises. In 2016, the number of Syrian refugees who settled in Edmonton was 2,183⁴, 15,900 Ukrainian evacuees settled here as of February 2024⁵ and 5,215 Afghan refugees as of August 2024⁶.

The City is preparing for a population of two million, and the majority of the new residents will be immigrants. This makes the City Plan's commitment to support newcomer settlement increasingly essential. Between 2022 and 2023, Edmonton CMA net international migration was estimated at

¹ In this report, Administration uses "migrant" as an umbrella term for individuals born outside Canada who reside in Edmonton, either temporarily or permanently, for various reasons. This encompasses first-generation immigrants, evacuees, newcomers, refugees, asylum seekers, individuals with precarious status and others.

² Statistics Canada. "Census subdivisions with a population of 5,000 or more by province or territory". (2021). [https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810034804&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.791&pickMembers%5B1%5D=2.1&pickMembers%5B2%5D=3.1&pickMembers%5B3%5D=4.1].

³ Edmonton Global. "Edmonton region leads in attracting and retaining international talent". (2023). [https://edmontonglobal.ca/news/dyk-attracting-and-retaining-international-talent-in-canda/].

⁴ City of Edmonton. "Programs to Settle and Support Syrian Refugees in Edmonton". (2019). [https://pub-edmonton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=5929].

⁵ Alberta Association of Immigration Serving Agencies. "Mapping Ukrainian Evacuees in Alberta: A Heat Map Analysis of Arrival Trends". (2024). [https://ukrainiansinalberta.ca/finalresidencies/].

⁶ Government of Canada. "#WelcomeAfghans: Key figures". (2024). [https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/afghanistan/key-figures.html]

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38,491.⁷ This underscores the need for a review and update of City Policy C529 to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness.

Jurisdictional Scan Findings

While jurisdiction over immigration is shared between the federal and provincial governments, municipalities assume a frontline role in integrating migrants, often serving as a primary point of contact for essential services.

To support municipalities in coordinating immigration and settlement efforts, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), a department within the Government of Canada, funds Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) in 87 communities across Canada, including Edmonton. The IRCC also funds settlement services in the community to address the broad spectrum of settlement needs of newcomers and refugees. These range from language training to information and orientation to service access and employment related supports.

From a provincial standpoint, the Government of Alberta oversees the Alberta Advantage Immigration Program (AAIP), aiming to address the province's labour market needs by offering four streams for foreign workers⁸. These include the Alberta Opportunity Stream and Rural Renewal Stream, which focus on skilled workers, rural workforce needs and specific sectors such as healthcare and technology. The Government of Alberta also provides significant grants to support newcomer integration through employment and language training initiatives like the Settlement, Integration and Language Program and Foreign Credential Recognition Program.

A cross-jurisdictional scan of Canadian municipalities demonstrates that local governments acknowledge their involvement in the immigration and settlement ecosystem, with many adopting specific policies focused on immigrant inclusion, integration and access (Attachment 1). This ranges from the implementation of inclusive frameworks, policies and language, as well as considerations for equity and anti-racism to advance this work. Municipalities often fulfill these roles as service providers, navigators, facilitators, partners, supporters and catalysts for organizational and community change. This is seen in the City of Winnipeg's Newcomer Welcome and Inclusion Policy, as well as the City of Toronto's Newcomer Office and Strategy, which has committed the City to four roles in supporting newcomer communities: "policy-maker", "service provider", "employer" and "buyers of goods and services".

While municipalities are often the first point of contact for newcomer needs, they cannot address the unique challenges experienced by newcomers on their own. Effective integration requires strong partnerships between municipalities, other orders of government and community organizations to address intersectional needs.

The City of Edmonton's Role in Supporting Migrants

To date, Administration has implemented a range of policies and approaches to address the unique needs of diverse communities, including migrants, to advance their experience and

⁷Statistics Canada. "Components of population change by census metropolitan area and census agglomeration, 2021 boundaries". (2024).

[<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710014901>].

⁸ <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-advantage-immigration-program>

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outcomes in Edmonton. These include policies such as C593B Public Engagement Policy; programs like the Language Identifiers program and the inclusive swim initiative; funding support like the Emerging Immigrant and Refugee Communities Grant program and engagement efforts such as the waste cart rollout.

The City aims to ensure all Edmontonians can access City programs and services, regardless of their immigration status. It has enhanced the eligibility criteria of both the Ride Transit Program and Leisure Access programs, making them more accessible to those with precarious status, such as refugees.

Since 2019, Administration has led the Edmonton Local Immigration Partnership (ELIP), a federally funded forum that brings together over 250 contacts from newcomer settlement service providers. This working group focuses on addressing settlement issues and developing solutions related to employment, safety and other opportunities for collaboration. While ELIP serves as a central platform, the City also participates in various collaborative forums addressing community issues, including those impacting migrants, such as the Multi-Stakeholder Provincial Table: Alberta's Ukraine Efforts.

In response to two Council motions in 2021, Administration has been leading initiatives to support the migrant population in Edmonton. The first motion, from Community and Public Services Committee report CR_7520, Programs to Settle and Support Syrian Refugees in Edmonton on October 16, 2019, led to an annual report to Committee on the State of Immigration and Settlement done in collaboration with a community steering committee. These reports assess key challenges affecting Edmonton's migrant population and the impact of federal, provincial and municipal policies on their lives. Previous topics have included housing, education, employment and the experiences of undocumented migrants. The second motion requested a status update in regards to the development of a refugee/newcomer housing and health centre. Information relating to that motion was previously shared in the November 21, 2022 Community Services report CS00788, Refugee and Newcomer Housing Project Update.

Proposed Recommendations Updated C529A Policy

The revised policy, titled "Migrant Inclusion" (Attachment 2), aims to guide strategies and initiatives within Administration to facilitate the full participation of migrants within Edmonton's communities. It also aligns with the equity-driven focus of key strategies, including the City Plan, ConnectEdmonton, Edmonton Economic Action Plan, Community Safety and Well-being, GBA+ and the Anti-Racism Strategy. There are also shared challenges and opportunities for learning with the City's advancement on Indigenous reconciliation, which will be vital to strengthening relationships between migrant and Indigenous communities.

Based on engagement feedback, six areas of focus, supplemented by guiding principles, are recommended to support migrants. The focus areas, along with their corresponding rationale, are outlined below:

1. Inclusive Economy

Migrants encounter persistent underemployment despite their contributions to Edmonton's economic sustainability through their knowledge, skills and resources. This focus area provides an

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opportunity for the City of Edmonton to act as a model employer and business partner to actively promote opportunities and inclusive practices aimed at improving the economic outcomes of migrants.

2. Service Access and Equity

Migrants, like other Edmontonians, utilize a range of City services but may face settlement challenges in fully accessing them due to language and cultural barriers. This focus area aims to enhance City staff's intercultural understanding and to evaluate City programs to ensure they eliminate barriers and provide equitable, culturally responsive service delivery to migrants.

3. Neighbourhood Inclusion

Migrants report varied experiences of inclusion in their neighbourhoods, ranging from feelings of belonging to encounters with bias and prejudice. Neighbourhoods should prioritize safety, foster inclusion and celebrate diversity within the social and physical environments. This focus area guides the City of Edmonton in addressing barriers to inclusion while leveraging the intellectual and cultural assets of migrant communities in local planning.

4. Accessible Communications and Civic Engagement

Migrant participation in civic engagement, such as voting, attending public consultations and running for Council, remains limited. This focus area encourages the City to cultivate its engagement approaches and City processes to increase migrant civic participation.

5. Data for Action

Disaggregated data collection can highlight socioeconomic disparities between demographics and create opportunities for tailored, data-informed responses. This focus area guides the City of Edmonton in developing a disaggregated data collection approach that targets equity-deserving groups and their intersectionalities to understand current and emerging migrant needs.

6. Leadership in Advocacy and Implementation

The settlement issues of migrants are multifaceted and require shared understanding and commitment from all orders of government and multi-sector community organizations to achieve transformational change. This focus area entrusts the City to convene and work together with its public and private sector counterparts to promote the full participation of migrants.

Next Steps

Pending Council approval, Administration will develop a Migrant Action Plan, which is intended to provide a roadmap for implementing the updated City Policy C529A. The plan will aim to provide clear guidance to support migrants on current and future initiatives, ensuring they are intentional, focused and effective. Considerations include:

- Needs Assessment: A needs assessment that builds upon the State of Immigration and Settlement reports and focuses on conducting a current state review, needs and future trajectory of the immigration and settlement ecosystem through qualitative and quantitative data gathering.
- Corporate action plan: A corporate action plan that clarifies Administration's optimal role(s) in the settlement sector, unites efforts, sets clear goals and identifies corporate

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actions to advance migrant outcomes in Edmonton. This will include key deliverables, timelines, accountability structures and an evaluation plan, as well as a reporting schedule to monitor progress effectively.

- **Community partner plan:** A plan to work with community partners, identifying areas for direct action and opportunities for collaboration, considering jurisdictional boundaries. The plan will be informed by migrant-serving organizations, and explore opportunities to integrate and work collectively with existing community initiatives like ELIP and the State of Immigration and Settlement report and include key deliverables, timelines, accountability structures and an evaluation plan, as well as a reporting schedule to monitor progress effectively.
- **Funding:** A funding review to ensure City funding is positioned, within their parameters, to best respond to the needs of migrants and advance the implementation of the Migrant Action Plan. This plan will also seek to attract and optimize investments made by other orders of government, where appropriate.

The proposed process to complete a draft Migrant Action Plan can be found in Attachment 3, with an anticipated return of the Corporate Action Plan through an Administration-led report to Council in 2026. Evaluation will be integrated into the action plan with specific metrics for measuring progress being determined during the Migrant Action Plan engagement.

Budget/Financial Implications

Much of this work will be done within existing budgets, resources, grant programs and available investments from other orders of government. Once the Migrant Action Plan to operationalize City Policy C529A has been validated through community engagement, Administration may identify areas that would benefit from new investment. If this occurs, Administration would bring forward funding requests to Council for consideration during future four-year or supplemental budget adjustment processes.

Community Insight

The City Policy C529A update process was multifaceted and based on a people-informed approach, ensuring that those most affected by the policy had a significant role in its development. The initial stage included a community-led review to assess its relevance within the current settlement landscape. A total of 239 participants, ranging from migrants, City of Edmonton staff, Council Advisory Committees members and community organizations, contributed their knowledge and experiences. The insights obtained from the review were grouped into emerging themes and shared back with participants to ensure resonance. Greater detail on the engagement process and the learnings produced can be found in Attachment 4 and Attachment 5.

The second phase involved presenting community with a refreshed draft of City Policy C529A for ongoing validation. This new version was informed by the collective insights obtained from continued engagements with the community and a cross-jurisdictional scan of how other municipalities were supporting the settlement sector. Eighty-seven participants, representing individuals with lived

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experience, thought leaders⁹ and those who work with migrant communities, engaged in the validation process and provided their insights. A summary of feedback can be found in Attachment 6.

GBA+

Many migrants often face significant barriers in navigating systems due to factors such as poverty, language barriers, post-traumatic stress disorder, unemployment, unrecognized foreign credentials, housing affordability issues, racism, anti-immigration sentiments and others. Unless the needs of migrants are explicitly and intentionally considered in policy and program planning, their unique circumstances may be overlooked, disregarded or inadequately addressed. Prioritizing these needs can help ensure resulting policy is more inclusive, evidence-based and effective.

Recognizing these realities, a diverse range of interested and affected community members who emigrated from their countries of origin, particularly within Asia, Africa and Latin America, were consulted to ensure a comprehensive review of City Policy C529A. Participants held a range of intersecting identity factors, including various citizenship status, age groups, abilities, faiths, genders and racial backgrounds, as well as marginalized communities like the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and other underrepresented perspectives.

To promote involvement, community engagement sessions were conducted in participants' first language from their respective communities to inform the policy. Tailored group facilitations, based on partner organization recommendations, were arranged for underrepresented groups like newcomer 2SLGBTQIA+ members and migrants with disabilities. These sessions were conducted in formats and locations that best suited participants, including in-person or virtual options.

Environment and Climate Review

This report was reviewed for environment and climate risks. Based on the review completed, no significant interactions with the City's environmental and climate goals were identified within the scope of this report.

Attachments

1. Consultant Report: Immigration and Settlement in Edmonton: Refreshed Policy Backgrounder for C529 Policy
2. DRAFT Council Policy
3. Migrant Action Plan Development Process
4. Consultant Report: An Equity Approach to Policy Change: Reviewing C529 Policy on Immigration and Settlement
5. Consultant Report: Companion Document to An Equity Approach to Policy Change: Reviewing C529 Policy on Immigration and Settlement

⁹ Thought Leaders are defined as participants from a diverse array of community leaders, academics, researchers, policymakers, practitioners and Council Advisory Committee members. This group included representatives from the arts, business, not for profit and social sectors, as well as those from the Accessibility Advisory Committee, City of Edmonton Youth Council and Women's Advisory Voice of Edmonton.

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6. Consultant Report: What We Heard: Settlement and Inclusion of All Migrants