



Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture

Report on Consultations with Newcomers, Employers and Service Providers

East Downtown Toronto Local Immigration Partnership



Funded by:



**Citizenship and
Immigration Canada**

**Citoyenneté et
Immigration Canada**

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East Downtown Toronto Local Immigration Partnership

Objectives of East Downtown Toronto LIP:

- 1.** To improve access and coordination of immigrant integration services (settlement, language training, labour market integration, health and education supports) in the community through the establishment of a partnership council;
- 2.** To enhance service delivery coordination to newcomers, resident within east Toronto, so that programs complement and build towards a common goal of settlement and integration;
- 3.** To build a community of practice which shares learning from each other and from resident newcomers;
- 4.** To strengthen local awareness and capacity to integrate immigrants through the engagement of a broad range of local stakeholders and residents in the formation of the settlement strategy;
- 5.** To help members develop best practices and create a forum for learning and sharing.

Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) is the lead agency that has assumed the responsibility to coordinate and advance the Local Immigration Partnership Initiative in the East Downtown Toronto area.

CCVT's Mandate

The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) aids survivors to overcome the lasting effects of torture and war. In partnership with the community, the Centre supports survivors in the process of successful integration into Canadian society, works for their protection and integrity, and raises awareness of the continuing effects of torture and war on survivors and their families. The CCVT gives hope after the horror.

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We would also like to thank the Steering Committee for their hard work and support on this project. The East Downtown Toronto LIP Steering Committee is comprised of the following member agencies:

- Asian Community for AIDS Services
- Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention
- Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture
- Dixon Hall
- Family Service Toronto
- Fred Victor Centre
- Sherbourne Health Centre
- Sojourn House
- Women's Health in Women's Hands
- AIDS Committee of Toronto

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was drafted to highlight key issues and priorities from a series of consultations conducted with approximately 118 newcomers, 12 service providers, and 4 employers between April and May 2010. The report represents the findings from the consultation phase of work conducted by Public Interest and Community Partnership Council members on behalf of the East Downtown Toronto Local Immigration Partnership.

Newcomer Populations and Context

Newcomers in East Downtown Toronto are an extremely diverse community coming mostly from East Africa, West Africa, South Asia, South America, and East Asia. Service providers identified only slight changes to newcomer populations, though most recognized an increase in the number of newcomers living in the area.

East Downtown Toronto was identified as a good place to live upon arrival because of proximity to services and public transportation. However, newcomers tend to eventually move out of the area in search of cheaper housing. As newcomers move out of the area they will continue to use services in East Downtown Toronto. This could present greater demands on service providers as newcomers continue to move in and out of the area.

Key Issues, Challenges, and Opportunities

Newcomers often felt misled about their prospects for employment before arriving in Canada and arrived expecting to find work that pays well and matches their qualifications more easily. Despite the high number of newcomers, there was an identified lack of employment services that are specifically aimed at newcomers in East Downtown Toronto. Once newcomers had obtained employment, the difference in work culture and negative perceptions were barriers to job retention. Newcomers felt that getting rejected from jobs that they were qualified for had negative psychological effects on them. Stress, anxiety and depression are real concerns for newcomers. Newcomers and employers suggested that there should be more one-on-one assistance to find work, retain those jobs, and start small businesses.

Language issues can contribute to other challenges for East Downtown newcomers including employment and access to services, housing, and transportation. Francophone newcomers identified challenges in finding linguistically appropriate services especially around health services and childcare availability. Interpretation was identified by newcomers as important, but was only available for immigration related services. Service providers identified the need for more resources for interpretation especially in shelters and at the airport. In terms of language learning, newcomers highlighted the need for varying teaching styles to match different learning styles of newcomers.

Housing was identified by newcomers and service providers as the most immediate priority for newcomers upon arrival. For newcomers, the bigger issue was finding housing that was affordable, large enough for their family, and was in a neighbourhood where they felt comfortable and safe. Newcomers indicated that services could be more responsive and sensitive to individual housing needs. Newcomers would also

benefit greatly from a better understanding of their rights as tenants. This could prevent them from being taken advantage of by some landlords.

Few newcomers consulted had access to family doctors and many did not know where to source them. However, different newcomer populations had different experiences of accessing healthcare. Newcomers living with HIV/AIDS indicated that they were able to get access to a family doctor, but less likely to have sourced an HIV/AIDS specialist. Newcomers living with HIV/AIDS also identified a desire to speak to as few people as possible about their medical condition. Newcomers in the Francophone community faced challenges finding French speaking doctors in Toronto. In some cultures, stigma that is associated with certain types of services – more notably with mental health services – can often prevent some newcomers from accessing these types of services.

Most newcomers consulted take TTC or walk to get to work and services in the area. However, fares were identified by newcomers as too high if using the TTC everyday and could be a barrier to accessing services. Funding to provide TTC fares for transportation to and from services would be beneficial for newcomers.

Education was another challenge and opportunity raised by newcomers. Newcomers highlighted the benefits of a Canadian education as allowing newcomers to develop personal networks, to obtain a Canadian degree where issues of credential recognition were non-existent, and to allow time for the newcomer to not have to rely on full time employment for financial support. Newcomers identified difficulties and long wait times associated with applying for a post-secondary education in Canada.

Some newcomers raised the issue of discrimination because of race, gender and sexual orientation in conjunction with other issues or challenges they face. Issues of discrimination tend to exacerbate other challenges around access to employment, housing and healthcare. Many issues of discrimination are systemic, and there is a need for education and advocacy to alleviate newcomers.

Often men are the principle applicant in a family and come to Canada to find work while the rest of the family is in the country of origin. However, men face a number of challenges upon arrival including navigating the family reunification process and self-esteem issues caused by challenges in finding appropriate employment. Women identified social isolation, childcare duties, language, housing and employment as major challenges upon arrival. Women newcomers who are parents face additional challenges of finding and facilitating access to supports for their children and members of their families who are seniors. Youth identified challenges with language, discrimination, adapting to a formal school system, and managing family childcare duties upon arrival to Canada. Youth do not use many settlement services outside of the family beside youth or social groups. Seniors face challenges around social isolation stemming from a dependence on their family. Most challenges faced by seniors who are newcomers are based on the seniors' reliance on their families for housing, income, and communication. Even within larger family units, language, and economic independence are issues that seniors encounter.

Refugees are less likely to know anyone upon arrival to Canada and therefore have additional challenges connecting to supports and services, and some of the greatest barriers to settlement. Refugees also often arrive in Canada having experienced trauma in their country of origin, and face significant challenges with housing, and employment. In terms of housing, refugees are more likely to start life in Canada living in shelters in the East Downtown Toronto area than other immigrants. Additional employment challenges

occur because refugees are given Social Insurance Numbers that begin with the number “9” which many newcomers felt allowed employers to discriminate against refugees based on their immigration status.

Precarious status newcomers were among those facing the most severe challenges. People with precarious status in East Downtown Toronto do not feel comfortable approaching some services because of their status and the information that those services require. This was particularly true of health services. Other services, again may force precarious status newcomers to relive potentially traumatic experiences in order to prove their eligibility for services. The strain of revealing trauma highlights the need for trust to be built between precarious status newcomers and service providers (both settlement and mainstream services).

LGBT newcomers face many of the same challenges of other newcomers in East Downtown Toronto with a few exceptions. LGBT newcomers were likely to have expectations about Canada being a safe place with more employment opportunities for members of the LGBT communities. LGBT newcomers also identified arriving in Canada because of discrimination or fear of persecution in their country of origin.

Newcomers living with HIV/AIDS also face many of the same challenges of other newcomers in East Downtown Toronto. However, newcomers living with HIV/AIDS were more likely to be able to access family doctors than other newcomers. Those living with HIV/AIDS were not always accessing specialists because many newcomers living with HIV/AIDS do not want to reveal their health condition to a lot of people. Stigma associated with HIV/AIDS in some countries of origin was also identified as a barrier for some newcomers living with HIV/AIDS to accessing needed services in the area.

Francophone newcomers also face many of the same challenges as other newcomers. Francophone newcomers were more likely to arrive in Canada with expectations that they would be able to communicate effectively in French because Canada is a bilingual country. These expectations have also led to challenges in finding linguistically appropriate services especially around healthcare and day cares. Employment was also a significant issue for Francophone newcomers, specifically in relation to the recognition of foreign credentials.

Implications for Services, Supports, and Settlement

Both service providers and newcomers indicated that there are a lot of services located in close proximity to each other in East Downtown Toronto. Newcomers in the area come from diverse communities, and services are generally able to meet these diverse needs, but are strained as demand grows. Services in the area are provided in many different languages. Similarly, service providers identified more services in the area that support specific newcomer populations such as LGBT, victims of torture, and HIV/AIDS newcomer communities. These characteristics attract a growing demand for services.

Collaboration among East Downtown Toronto service providers leads to an increase in numbers of newcomers served, a greater variety of services and supports provided, and better referrals that all help meet the needs of newcomers locally. For agencies, greater collaboration builds capacity internally, creates awareness of opportunities and challenges, informs service providers of other services and supports being provided, reduces duplication of services, and leads to joint funding opportunities. Collaboration, however, also requires resources and the current collaborative model may not be sustainable without further dedication of resources.

Issues raised about settlement services go beyond settlement to other mainstream services as well (including Health, Education, and Transportation). Consistently, newcomers identified the need for more personal contact in the delivery of services. This would involve more one-on-one interaction with newcomers, a comprehensive network of supports for each newcomer and a more holistic approach to the issues that newcomers face. Newcomers and service providers identified the need for more accurate and up to date information from settlement agencies, better referrals between settlement agencies, and better referrals between settlement agencies and mainstream services. In improving services for newcomers, many service providers identified a role for the Local Immigration Partnership to help facilitate improvements. Possible roles include the LIP supporting further collaboration by centralizing information, assisting in the establishment of partnerships, assisting with referrals, providing training workshops and networking opportunities between service agencies, and advocating on behalf of newcomers.

INTRODUCTION

This report was drafted to highlight key issues and priorities from a series of consultations carried out between April and May 2010. The report represents the findings from the consultation phase of work conducted by Public Interest and Community Partnership Council members on behalf of the East Downtown Toronto Local Immigration Partnership. Consultation findings were analyzed by Public Interest.

The report covers a range of issues and challenges identified in consultation both on the settlement process for newcomers and the service and support infrastructure in East Downtown Toronto. These issues and priorities for newcomers and service providers have been included in the results of the report. While most consultation participants indicated that much of the service and supports in the area are actively responding to the priorities of newcomers, they also identified potential improvements.

While the focus group results offer useful insights into the experiences of newcomers settling in East Downtown Toronto, the number of focus groups conducted is not sufficient to derive meaningful statistical data about any of the population groups consulted. The results are intended to build on a review of literature and statistical highlights previously researched to validate and verify the broader issues that are also true for newcomers in East Downtown Toronto.

CONNECTION WITH RESEARCH FINDINGS

The first phase of work carried out in March 2010 explored literature and past studies on newcomers in Canada, and more specifically East Downtown Toronto. Statistical data relating to recent immigrants in East Downtown Toronto was also analyzed. The research conducted as part of the literature review and statistical highlights demonstrated that a number of issues cumulatively contribute to longer processes of settlement and integration in East Downtown Toronto. These issues include language, discrimination, employment and poverty, housing, information and access, and health and mental health for a number of specific populations including women, youth, seniors, and precarious status newcomers. The consultation served to deepen the understanding of some of these key issues identifying newcomers while exploring other issues facing newcomers and affecting other specific newcomer populations. For the most part, the findings of the consultation reinforce the findings from the research and add a local level of detail to the process of settlement in East Downtown Toronto.

The results of the consultation point towards 3 major themes of findings. These themes include the current context that informs the challenges facing newcomers, the key issues, challenges, and opportunities facing different newcomer populations in the area, and overall implications for service providers and other supports in East Downtown Toronto. Recommendations derived from the comments of newcomers and service providers are included near the end of the document as a summary of opportunities explored in the findings.

METHODOLOGY

Consultations were carried out in 8 focus groups with newcomers including: men, women, youth, seniors, men living with HIV/AIDS, women living with HIV/AIDS, LGBT newcomers, and newcomers from the Francophone community. A total of 12 surveys were completed by service providers located in East Downtown Toronto. Individual interviews were conducted with 5 newcomers who were identified as having precarious status to gain a better understanding of their experiences, and 4 employer interviews were conducted to better understand employer needs when it comes to labour market integration.

Focus group, interview, and survey participants were recruited by Community Partnership Council members. For the purpose of these consultations, “*newcomer*” was defined as an individual who has been in Canada up to 10 years. This definition of “*newcomer*” included, but was not limited to: sponsored family members, business immigrants, internationally trained professionals, internationally trained skilled workers, convention refugees, refugee claimants, government assisted refugees (GAR), temporary workers, live-in caregivers, foreign students who intend to stay in Canada and immigrants after becoming Canadian citizens that still need to access your services.

The definition of “*precarious status*” newcomers included refugee claimants whose claims had been denied and/or in the process of appeal, family-sponsored immigrants who had separated from their spouses, and people who had entered the country on student, visitor, temporary worker visas/permits that since expired.

Focus group participants were required to meet a number of criteria (See Appendix A for details).

Most focus groups were conducted with between 8 and 12 participants; though larger groups were held where there was considerable interest. Most were conducted in English. The senior’s focus group was conducted in English with Somali interpretation as the majority of senior participants were Somali women; and the francophone focus group was conducted entirely in French. All participants received honorariums of \$20 per person as well as transit fare reimbursements. Some newcomers felt that the honorarium was too low considering the amount of time asked of them. Young mothers faced some constraints to participating in focus groups because resources were not available for childcare supports. Focus groups were conducted with trauma counselors on site to provide support as required. Interviews with precarious status newcomers were completed privately, one-on-one, with trauma counselors also on site. Interviews with St. Michael’s Hospital, Royal Bank, Grand Hotel and Suites, and Shopper’s Drug Mart, to gain the perspectives of employers were conducted by telephone. Service provider surveys were completed by Community Partnership Council members through email.

Questions covered a variety of topics and were developed based on findings from the East Downtown Toronto Environmental Scan Report in May 2010 which included a literature review and statistical highlights for the East Downtown area. Questions focused on exploring the key priorities for newcomers and how services and supports have responded to them from both newcomer and service provider perspectives (See Appendix B for details). The following is a summary of key issues raised in consultation.

NEWCOMER POPULATIONS AND CONTEXT

Different newcomer populations were engaged through the consultation process that represented a range of experiences and backgrounds. Over 52% of newcomers consulted came to Canada from Africa (Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Egypt, Uganda, Congo, Rwanda, Eritrea, and Algeria), 11% from East Asia (China, Korea, and Japan), 11% from West Asia (Israel, Iraq, and Iran), 9% from North and South America (United States, Mexico, Columbia, and Brazil), 5% from the Caribbean (Jamaica and Haiti), 7% from Europe (Sweden, Ukraine, and Russia), 4% from South Asia (Pakistan and India).

According to service providers, newcomers who are service users in East Downtown are coming from East Africa (Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya), West Africa, South Asia (Sri Lanka, India), South America (Mexico), Caribbean and China.

The majority of newcomers consulted in focus groups were women at 62% of participants compared to 38% who were men. The average period of arrival for participants was 4 years with a range of newcomers coming to Canada in between 2 months and 9 years.

Newcomer populations were identified by service providers as changing slightly in recent years. More newcomers are perceived by service providers as living in East Downtown Toronto because of accessibility of public transit and proximity to settlement services. East Downtown Toronto is considered a good place to live upon arrival – as an entrance community – because of proximity to services, but people eventually move out of the area to find cheaper housing. Despite moving outside of the area, many newcomers remain connected to the services in East Downtown Toronto. For this reason, service providers are serving newcomers that live in the area and across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). This could present greater demands on service providers as different newcomer populations continue to move into the area.

The majority of newcomers who are service users in East Downtown Toronto area are coming from East Africa (Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya), West Africa, South Asia (Sri Lanka, India), South America (Mexico), Caribbean and China.

KEY ISSUES, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

The issues below – Employment, Language, Housing, Health, Transportation, Education, and Discrimination – were identified by newcomers and service providers as key issues that play a significant role in the lives of newcomers across all consulted populations. Other communities described below have unique experiences as Men, Women, Youth, Seniors, Refugees, Non-Status, and LGBT newcomers.

Employment

Employment was identified by both newcomers and service providers as one of the most important and immediate issues facing newcomers in East Downtown Toronto. Most newcomers consulted were looking for some form of employment after a few months in Canada.

Barriers:

Employers and newcomers identified a number of barriers to newcomers gaining employment that matches their skills and qualifications. Consistent with the research findings, newcomers indicated that it could take many years to get a good job that matched their background. East Downtown newcomers set that period as stretching up to 5 years, longer than most research contemplates.

Newcomers also found that barriers to employment began even before arrival. Many indicated that newcomers often felt misled about their prospects for employment before arriving in Canada and arrived expecting to find better work more easily.

Language was identified by consultation participants as a barrier to employment, both in terms of fluency in English and non-English accents. While language was seen as a barrier to employment by some participants, employers also identified hiring newcomers with varying language skills as highly beneficial for employers.

Some newcomers identified the need for “Canadian experience” as being both a challenge to employment and a vicious circle that a newcomers needs to get a job in Canada before they can get a job in Canada. As in other locations identified through research, the issue of “Canadian experience” is a complex one, though. Employers did not identify the need for “Canadian experience”, nor indicate any noticeable resistance to hiring newcomers per se. However they did indicate that some jobs required local knowledge – such as, knowing the geographies of a neighbourhood and the City well and knowing how governmental systems work. While some employers understand the range of barriers facing newcomers to find and retain employment, this understanding is inconsistent across employers in general.

Services:

Despite the many challenges newcomers face, service providers identified a lack of employment services that are specifically aimed at newcomers in East Downtown Toronto. The few services that do exist are often inaccessible and often disconnected from the settlement infrastructure.

Having a temporary or part-time job currently hinders newcomers from seeking employment services to find jobs that more closely reflect their experience and qualifications. The time when services are available often conflict with working hours. Newcomers identified that some people will not tell employment service providers about being temporarily employed so they can continue to receive supports. As suggested in much of the literature, newcomers and service providers also identified the need for more on-the-job supports to help newcomers with advancement and retention in their jobs. Newcomers and employers both felt there was a longer period of acculturation for newcomers starting work – meaning that it will take newcomers longer to adjust to the work-styles, language skills and cultural adjustments that match the employers' expectations. These issues again affect advancement and retention.

Underemployment:

Typical of many of the jurisdictions examined in the literature review, the lack of Canadian experience and recognition of foreign credentials were also identified by East Downtown newcomers as significant barriers to finding good employment. Newcomers and service providers often saw underemployment as a significant problem, but some newcomers felt a need to remove their education from resumes so they do not appear overqualified. The issue of underemployment is often fueled by the need to find work as quickly as possible whether or not it matches the applications skills and qualifications. Many newcomers felt torn between either supporting themselves financially immediately or engaging in longer-term career planning. Newcomers identified that it was challenging to do both because of a service system which favours the unemployed, and because of people time and energy.

Effects:

In addition to the negative impact underemployment and unemployment have on financial considerations, newcomers felt that getting rejected from jobs that they were qualified for had a psychological effect on them. Stress, anxiety and depression associated with challenges in finding employment are real concerns for newcomers. Once newcomers had a job, barriers persisted. The difference in work culture and negative perceptions were identified by employers as being a barrier to job retention. The lack of supports on-the-job has created a sense of impending failure for some newcomers. These newcomers feel that when newcomers are hired, they are set up to fail at their jobs because the needed supports are not existent.

Opportunities:

Consultation participants also identified a number of opportunities that could help alleviate some of the barriers to employment. These opportunities include more of the same kinds of employment services directed at newcomers that include the most basic job search assistance, such as help writing resumes, preparing for interviews, doing mock interviews, information on what to wear to interviews, rights in the workplace, and building professional networks. Many newcomers felt that the easiest way to find employment was through people they were already connected with. This highlights the need for supports in building professional networks. Newcomers indicated that services should be delivered in a way that was more appropriate and less condescending. Newcomers and employers also suggested that, in addition to basic services, there should be more one-on-one assistance and mentoring to find work, retain those jobs, and start small businesses. Supports around job retention would focus more on developing soft skills such as teamwork and communication. On the other hand, it would also be helpful to have work cultures that were more receptive to hiring newcomers. Some newcomers indicated that they had made the best of their employment situations, but wish that they had received accurate information about the challenges of finding good employment prior to arrival in Canada.

Language

Language was a common challenge raised by all categories of consultation participants, as well as being a common theme in the literature on settlement. Language can be a barrier that contributes to other challenges for East Downtown newcomers highlighted in this report including employment and access to services, housing, healthcare, and transportation. Generally, newcomers and service providers identified the need for more translated materials that describe the supports and services available. Issues of translated materials were identified as contributing to some lack of awareness of what services were available in the area. Francophone newcomers identified challenges in finding linguistically appropriate services especially around health services and childcare availability. Language was also identified as a family issue as often the children who have grown up in Canada can speak English and interpret for their parents. While this can help connect families to supports and services, the heavy reliance on their children can be isolating for newcomer parents.

Interpretation

Interpretation was identified by newcomers as not always being available when needed. Newcomers suggested that there were good interpretation supports when seeking support related to the process of immigration. However, newcomers also identified a gap in interpretation needs around doing occasional daily tasks such as grocery shopping. While some service providers indicated that they try to offer interpretation supports, there was an identified need for more resources to provide newcomers with increased access to interpretation supports. Some newcomers indicated that they had become isolated because they were afraid to leave the home to complete daily tasks when not able to speak English fluently. While newcomers identified the need for more interpretation in general, some newcomers identified specific locations where more interpretation was particularly important for newcomers settling in East Downtown Toronto. The first location identified was in shelters in Toronto. While shelter staff were identified as helpful, more interpretation would be important to support newcomers in finding more stable housing in those particularly vulnerable situations. The second location identified was at the airport on arrival. Many newcomers receive information about supports and services and this is often their first point of contact with the service sector. However, some newcomers also identified the need for interpretation in more languages to help navigate that initial service selection. Finally, service providers identified that newcomers do not want interpretation around sensitive services such as mental health services because they are sharing highly personal information and speaking about emotions which can be challenging for interpreters and often lead to misinterpretations between English and the newcomers' first language.

Language Learning

Newcomers identified a number of language supports and classes in the East Downtown Toronto area. Newcomers highlighted the need for varying teaching styles to match different learning styles of newcomers. Some may need teachers that speak their own language, while others may want teachers that speak to them only in English, so they can learn by example. Beyond learning how to speak English, newcomers expressed an interest in learning how to speak with a "Canadian" accent. Newcomers indicated that not having a Canadian accent would make it more difficult to find employment, while employers had varied responses about the importance of the accent and placing a greater importance on Canadian experience instead. Some newcomer identified frustration with the need to attend language classes to receive certain financial supports such as Ontario Works. One example of a newcomer's

frustration occurred when the newcomer was placed in the wrong language level class because of a lack of space. The newcomer was told that they needed to continue taking the class in order to continue receiving supports despite not advancing their own language skills.

Again, newcomers felt that expectations around language learning could be addressed more completely, prior to arrival to Canada, through more accurate information. This was particularly evident with some Francophone community newcomers that expected more Canadians spoke French because Canada is a bilingual country.

Housing

Finding Housing

Housing was identified by newcomers and service providers as one of the key challenges facing newcomers, but also the most immediate priority for newcomers upon arrival. Newcomer experience in the East Downtown reflected the same disconnection between the housing infrastructure and the settlement infrastructure that was experience in other jurisdictions researched. Housing is closely connected with the social determinants of health in the literature and the lack of ready access to good affordable housing has an adverse impact on newcomers. Most newcomers find housing through family and friends, websites (such as Craig's List), and some through housing support services. For newcomers, the bigger issue was finding housing that was appropriate for their living circumstances and was in a neighbourhood where they felt comfortable and safe. Appropriate living circumstances vary from newcomer to newcomer. However, newcomers consistently said that their housing should be affordable, big enough to house their family comfortably, and be located in communities that were safe for them and their children.

Newcomers indicated that more housing support workers were needed to give the appropriate amount of time to each individual case. Newcomers indicated that some housing support service providers offered lists of apartments to call without talking about the types of neighbourhoods a newcomer may want to live in. Some newcomers identified specifically that they would want to live close to others in their linguistic or cultural community, while others preferred to live away from their cultural communities because they fled those communities in their country of origin because of persecution or civil war. This highlights that housing support services should be responsive to the varying housing needs of newcomers and to their personal needs.

Shelters were also identified as being used by newcomers and especially refugee and precarious status newcomers. For this reason, many newcomers (and especially refugees), highlighted the importance of shelters in connecting newcomers to housing as well as other settlement supports and services. Despite these benefits, newcomers identified inconsistent referrals from shelter workers, and feelings of being unsafe because of the neighbourhoods that some East Downtown Toronto shelters are located in. Some newcomers perceived those neighbourhoods to have higher drug and crime rates.

Housing Rights

Other housing issues identified were around housing rights. Newcomers would benefit greatly from a better understanding of their rights as tenants. This could prevent them from being taken advantage of by some landlords. Newcomers cited examples of landlords not raising the heat in the apartment in the winter

despite complaints, and landlords deciding to sell the property which forces the newcomers to find new housing. Those with precarious status face additional challenges if the landlord is asking for documentation that they are not able to provide including social insurance or health cards, and those on Ontario Works also face barriers to finding housing that requires you to declare income on a housing application form.

Health and Mental Health

Access to health and mental health services is another consistent issue across newcomer populations in East Downtown Toronto, as it is in the literature for newcomers across Canada. Few newcomers consulted had access to family doctors and many did not know where to source them. Those that had family doctors are finding them through family, Public Health and hospitals. Different newcomer populations also had different experiences of accessing more personal and consistent healthcare. Newcomers in the HIV/AIDS community indicated that they were consistently able to get access to family doctors, however, fewer newcomers were accessing HIV/AIDS specialists. Those newcomers in the Francophone community faced challenges finding French speaking doctors in Toronto leading to long waiting lists and seeking health services outside of Toronto. Access to healthcare was identified as a challenge during the first 3 months of immigration as an OHIP application is being processed, for those with Interim Federal Health Certificates, and for those seeking healthcare through the Emergency Room because of long wait times.

Walk-in clinics and Community Health Centres (CHCs) were seen as helpful health services, especially for refugees and precarious status newcomers because they are able to access health services without having to disclose their status or rely on Interim Federal Health Certificates. These newcomers identified walk-ins and CHCs as safe to use. Unfortunately, in East Downtown Toronto, there are few walk-in clinics and CHCs that are taking new patients and are close by and not all are equally accessible to those newcomers without documentation. Access to services in these cases, becomes an issue of access to information about which health services do not require disclosure of documentation.

For the purpose of this work, stigma was described as the state of being perceived in a negative way by other people based on an individual's behaviours, physical appearances, illnesses, or reputations. Stigma can be associated with accessing some services in some cultures – more notably with mental health, and HIV/AIDS supports. This stigma can lead others to view the person accessing services in a negative way. This stigma was identified by some newcomers as preventing people from accessing services and getting support they need. Better access to health specialists and services delivered in ways that combat stigma would be helpful for newcomer populations in gaining access to health and mental health services. Newcomers and service providers identified that services delivered in a holistic way (by having one support agency identify all of a newcomers issues and service needs at once) would help newcomers struggling with stigma to speak freely about their experiences and seek the support they need.

Transportation

Public Transit, or TTC, was identified by newcomers as being a useful, but initially challenging form of transportation in East Downtown Toronto. Most newcomers consulted take TTC or walk to get to work and services in the area. However, fares were identified by newcomers as too high if using the TTC everyday, and could be a barrier to accessing services. Some newcomers identified needing to weigh the benefits of a particular service against the cost of getting there. The TTC can also be initially challenging for

newcomers who are trying to orient themselves to how the system works – especially newcomers who do not speak English.

Funding to provide TTC fares for transportation to and from services would be beneficial for newcomers. Also, newcomers expressed an interest in having orientations of the TTC system with someone who speaks their own language upon arrival in Toronto.

Education

Newcomers placed a high value on education for their families and often felt a Canadian education would be an advantage. Newcomers suggested that other newcomers should come to Canada to get a post-secondary degree. Going to school would give newcomers time to build personal social networks and Canadian experience while gaining an education that does not face the same credential challenges as education attained in the newcomer's country of origin. Student newcomers would be less reliant on finding full time employment and may be able to receive further supports (student loans) as they continue their studies. However, some newcomers identified that the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) was not available to newcomers and specific sources of funding for newcomer students were needed. Also, applying for an education can lead to extensive wait times, and newcomers suggested that newcomers make the arrangements prior to arrival in Canada. This would help reduce the amount of time spent in Canada waiting for acceptance into a post-secondary program.

Discrimination

While issues of discrimination were not articulated consistently by newcomers and service providers, it was an issue that seemed to be connected to many other barriers to settlement identified by newcomers including employment, language, housing, and health and mental health. Discrimination based on race, gender, and sexual orientation were frequently identified by newcomers during consultations. Issues of discrimination tend to be more systemic as they are dependent on the actions of employers, landlords, healthcare and other mainstream service providers, and are not solely reliant on the actions of settlement services. Service providers identified that more work around education and advocacy with newcomers would be helpful in reducing discrimination barriers.

Employment, Language, Housing, Health, Transportation, Education, and Discrimination – were identified by newcomers and service providers as key issues that play a significant role in the lives of newcomers across all consulted populations.

POPULATION SPECIFIC ISSUES

Age and gender issues

Every newcomer experiences immigration differently and not every newcomer of a particular group is the same. There were, however, some trends in newcomers' experiences of immigration that are common across newcomers based on their gender and age.

Some families are split because the principle applicant, often the male parent, has come to Canada to find work while the rest of the family is in the country of origin. This separation can create family stress and potentially aggravate health issues for newcomer men in Canada. Newcomers facing stress associated with family reunification find it challenging to start their lives in Canada without their families present. Having more supports for newcomers going through a family reunification process would help newcomers to focus on more immediate issues such as housing and employment. Newcomer men also identified self-esteem issues arising from challenges in finding employment that matches their qualifications and experience. While this affects newcomer women as well, men often face additional cultural expectations to be the main earners of income, and are often the first to arrive in Canada with the task of finding employment to support their families. These are high expectations that very few newcomer men identified were able to meet.

These issues can be exacerbated when the primary income earner is unable to find reliable employment in Canada and returns to the country of origin to improve earnings. Often this leaves the mother alone with young children in Canada while the father works in the country of origin. In these cases, the situation is reversed with the mother settling in Canada without a portion her family.

Newcomer women identified social isolation, childcare duties, language, employment and housing as major challenges upon arrival. The fact that some women newcomers were not able to participate in focus groups because of a lack of resources for childcare supports highlights the barriers to mothers seeking supports and services. Childcare barriers to accessing supports and services were identified by newcomers as being a combination of the general high costs associated with childcare, the lack of affordable or subsidized childcare, and a lack of personal time should all other childcare options be exhausted. Women newcomers who are parents face additional challenges of finding and facilitating access to supports for their children and the grandparents (seniors). In terms of employment, the TIEDI Analytical Report of June 2010 indicated that among newcomers, women refugees have the hardest time getting their credentials recognized.

Many youth that participated in the focus group arrived in Canada while they were children. Youth can have challenges at school around participating in a formal school system for the first time. Some youth (identified in focus groups as children of East African origins) were never enrolled in formal schooling before coming to Canada. Language is a challenge for school-aged children and youth that do not speak English; not speaking English makes it more difficult to socialize and make friends and excel academically. Youth newcomers identified facing challenges around racial discrimination from other youth and occasionally teachers. In terms of post secondary education, youth newcomers identified a long

application process to get into school. Youth also identified the need to take care of younger siblings as a barrier to accessing newcomer youth services and groups. Youth more likely to use internet for social reasons, and do not use many settlement services outside of the family beside youth groups. Some youth newcomers arrived in Canada unaccompanied by their families. All of the youth that participated in consultations and that came to Canada unaccompanied, were refugees. These youth were more likely to face the same challenges as other refugees around employment, housing, and healthcare than other youth. These unaccompanied youth also identified confusion over their ability to seek a post-secondary education because of their refugee status. This confusion has led to some youth not returning to school.

Seniors also face challenges around isolation, even those within larger family units find themselves isolated from people of a similar age and from broader social contact, due to duties at home and limited mobility and familiarity with Canadian systems. Seniors experience some consistent language and economic independence barriers. All of these challenges can be connected to the result of relying on their families for housing, income, language, and access to services. While many senior newcomers felt their families were very supportive of their needs, they lacked some independence especially on financial issues. This lack of financial dependence is an income security issue and could lead to issues of social isolation by having less freedom to leave the home, travel throughout the city, and access supports and services. Seniors identified the need for supports to develop own business ideas – seniors highlighted the potential

Newcomers facing stress associated with family reunification find it challenging to start their lives in Canada without their families present. Having more supports for newcomers going through a family reunification process would help newcomers to focus on more immediate issues such as housing and employment.

for collaborative sewing business – to generate more economic independence from the government and their families. More opportunities for recreation and socializing were identified as helpful to the process of settlement and reducing issues of isolation.

Refugees

The way that immigrants come to East Downtown Toronto also causes different kinds of challenges in accessing services and settling in Canada. Refugees and precarious status newcomer were identified by consultation participants as generally facing the greatest challenges among newcomer populations.

Many newcomers arrive in Canada with landed immigrant status and having some pre-established social networks through friends and family. Refugees however, identified that they are less likely to know anyone upon arrival to Canada and therefore have additional challenges connecting to supports and services. Refugees also often arrive in Canada having experienced trauma in their country of origin. In this work, trauma can be described as a physical or mental wound inflicted by

newcomers' experiences of war, torture, or persecution. Not only is this true for newcomers fleeing war, but it also applies to those facing persecution in their country of origin, such as the LGBT refugee community that in many cases leave their country of origin out of fear of persecution based on their sexual orientation. Trauma can be a barrier to service access as some services require that the newcomer

describe their past experiences prior to arrival in Canada as a condition of eligibility. This re-telling of their experiences can force some newcomers to relive their trauma. Newcomers identified that the process of applying for refugee status can also raise traumatic experiences. Housing, employment and education were identified by newcomers as the most significant challenges for refugees.

Refugees are more likely upon arrival in Canada to start living in shelters in the East Downtown Toronto area than other immigrants because they often come to Canada without much preparation and disconnected from social networks. This lack of social networks presents barriers to connecting to other needed supports and services in East Downtown Toronto. Many shelters were identified by newcomers in the area. However, newcomers also identified that some shelters were located in neighbourhoods that they deemed to be “unsafe” because of perceived drug and crime issues. Service providers identified that in recent years, there are more newcomers finding themselves in the shelter system. Shelters provide much needed supports to refugees in East Downtown Toronto beyond housing. However, some newcomers expressed frustration over inconsistent referrals to other housing and supports. Many refugees in the shelter system find referrals to social housing, but newcomers identified challenges associated with long waiting lists to get housing.

In terms of employment, education, and health issues, many refugees face the same challenges as other newcomers with some additional issues. Refugees are given Social Insurance Numbers that begin with the number “9”. This was identified by newcomers as a barrier to employment and housing applications that ask for a Social Insurance Number. One newcomer indicated that they had been rejected from a credit card application based on the “9” in their Social Insurance Number. There was also a sense that employers discriminated against refugees because they may not be permanent employees if their refugee claim is denied. On the issue of education, refugees expressed confusion over whether or not refugee claimants were able to go to school. This lack of clarity has prevented some refugees from furthering their education. In terms of health issues, refugees have difficulties in accessing health services in part because of the Interim Federal Health Certificates. The certificates were identified by newcomers as presenting challenges to finding a family doctor and to gaining access to complete health coverage.

Precarious Status Newcomers

Newcomers become “precarious status” by a number of means including having refugee claims denied but not feeling safe to return to their country of origin, expired work or student visas, and arriving as visitors and never leaving. Many of the precarious status newcomers interviewed as part of this consultation were in the process of applying for Humanitarian and Compassionate considerations. Precarious status newcomers face many of the challenges presented above as well as specific challenges relating to their status. Most of these challenges identified by precarious status newcomers are related to access to supports.

Precarious status newcomers in East Downtown Toronto do not feel comfortable or safe approaching some services because of their status and the information that those services require. Many agencies require documentation of arrival to Canada to prove eligibility for programs and services. This was identified by newcomers as being particularly true of health services. Other precarious status newcomers identified challenges in accessing employment training services because of their status. Other services, again may force precarious status newcomers to explain, and therefore relive, potentially traumatic experiences in order to prove their eligibility for services. The risks of revealing status highlights the need for trust to be

built between precarious status newcomers and service providers (both settlement and mainstream services). Some service providers consulted expressed that they operate under a “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy that allows newcomers to access services without revealing their status. More information about which organizations operate under a “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy would be helpful to precarious status newcomers. In addition, focus groups conducted at the Women’s Health in Women’s Hands Community Health Centre in 2009 indicated that applications for status are complicated and costly – costs are often especially expensive considering perceived lower incomes for non-status newcomers.

These challenges around building trust and feeling safe to disclose their status are some of the additional challenges that precarious status newcomers face compared to other newcomers. These challenges have led to what some precarious status newcomers considered a longer settlement process.

LGBT Newcomers

Many of the newcomers consulted in the LGBT community came to Canada from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. LGBT newcomers face many of the same challenges of other newcomers in East Downtown Toronto with a few exceptions. LGBT newcomers were likely to have expectations about Canada being a place with more employment opportunities for the LGBT communities. Compared to their country of origin, for the most part, these expectations were met. LGBT newcomers also identified arriving in Canada because of discrimination or fear of persecution in their country of origin. In contrast, some newcomers identified that they did not feel ashamed to be gay in Canada.

LGBT newcomers are accessing settlement services, mainstream services, and services specific to the LGBT community. Access to healthcare and employment were identified as the major needs of LGBT newcomers in East Downtown Toronto. Like most newcomers consulted, many LGBT newcomers identified challenges in getting access to family doctors. LGBT newcomers also identified challenges in the workplace around racial prejudice and discrimination. Housing issues were also identified as being important and challenging in terms of accessing subsidized housing. There was a sense that access to housing was sometimes prejudice against LGBT newcomers, though no specific examples were given, and there was a need for more education of LGBT issues for housing providers. While many LGBT newcomers identified that they faced less discrimination based on their sexual orientation in Canada than in their country of origin, they continue to face discrimination in the labour and housing markets because of their race and sexual orientation. These forms of discrimination have negative impacts on the settlement of LGBT newcomers by reducing self-esteem and other mental health impacts. Advocacy and education efforts to raise awareness about issues facing LGBT newcomers would be beneficial to help prevent further discrimination.

LGBT newcomers found that there was too much information about services online, making it difficult to discern what information was accurate. Also, they identified a need for better information on education and study permits and the costs involved to be available to newcomers. Some also felt that the government fees for education were too high.

Newcomers Living with HIV/AIDS

Many of the newcomers living with HIV/AIDS focus groups came to Canada from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Newcomers living with HIV/AIDS also face many of the same challenges of other newcomers in East Downtown Toronto. However, newcomers living with HIV/AIDS were more likely to be able to access family doctors than other newcomers. Those living with HIV/AIDS were not accessing

specialists because many newcomers living with HIV/AIDS do not want to reveal their health condition to more than one person. These newcomers were more likely to rely on their family doctors (General Practitioners) for medical support. Stigma associated with HIV/AIDS in some countries of origin was also identified as a barrier for some newcomers living with HIV/AIDS to accessing needed services in the area. Some newcomers also identified coming to Canada for protection, and many are appreciative of the level of access to treatment they have been able to receive compared to their country of origin. Generally, the quality of health treatment received by newcomers living with HIV/AIDS was high. However, more work is needed to connect more newcomers living with HIV/AIDS to specialists in order to receive better treatment.

Access to healthcare and employment were identified as the major issues facing newcomers living with HIV/AIDS in East Downtown Toronto. Within the healthcare system, newcomers identified racial discrimination as an issue. Also, government funded dentists, while identified as affordable, were also identified as being of lower quality. Newcomers living with HIV/AIDS also found that it took longer to find employment and to enroll for school than expected before coming to Canada.

Newcomers living with HIV/AIDS identified the need for better information provided at the airport to help settle in Canada. Government orientation workshops were also seen as valuable to help understand how the system works in Canada.

Francophone Newcomers

Again, Francophone newcomers face many of the same challenges as other newcomers. Francophone newcomers were more likely to arrive in Canada with expectations that they would be able to communicate effectively in French because Canada is a bilingual country. These expectations have also led to challenges in finding linguistically appropriate services especially around healthcare and day cares. Many Francophone newcomers first lived in Quebec upon arrival to Canada and subsequently moved to Toronto. Of those that moved to Toronto, most indicated that it was to live close to family.

Language is one of the most common challenges for Francophone newcomers. Francophone newcomers also identified the need for more government services in French and indicated that there was reluctance on behalf of some government staff to speak to them in French for concern of making a mistake. Newcomers identified the need for more personal services that were linguistically appropriate as opposed to more translated materials such as pamphlets. Employment was also a significant issue for Francophone newcomers, specifically in relation to the recognition of foreign credentials.

Francophone newcomers also identified a number of challenges to settling and integrating into Canada. These challenges include corrupt lawyers that were cited as charging too much money to support newcomers through the immigration process. Francophone newcomers also identified hearing racist comments suggesting that they return to their country of origin. Both of these issues can impact the settlement of Francophone newcomers in a negative way.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SERVICES, SUPPORTS, AND SETTLEMENT

Overall, service providers are aware of the existing challenges they face supporting newcomers. Many of the supports provided by settlement agencies are working well, however there is room for improvement. Some improvements are structural (for example, funding does not currently exist for certain types of supports), but other areas that require improvement, such as networking, referrals, and collaboration, can be addressed more directly by agencies (both in terms of internal policies and front-line work). These changes overall would make services in East Downtown Toronto more easier to find, more accessible, and more responsive. Consulted service providers indicated that the Local Immigration Partnership could potentially play a role in facilitating this process.

What's Working in East Downtown Toronto

Despite some need for service improvements identified by newcomers and service providers, many aspects of services are working well in East Downtown Toronto.

Both service providers and newcomers indicated that there are a lot of services located in close proximity to each other in East Downtown Toronto. This was identified by service providers as helpful to newcomers in being able to access needed services. The large density of services in the area, combined with a sizeable newcomer population from a variety of backgrounds, has also led to services being provided in many different languages. Service providers sensed that language accessibility was important, and newcomers indicated that language needs were somewhat being addressed by area service providers. Nonetheless, an increase in resources for interpretation and an improvement of language services were identified by newcomers and service providers as beneficial to reducing remaining language barriers in the area. Similarly, service providers identified a higher than average number of services in the area with mandates that support specific newcomer populations such as LGBT, victims of torture, and HIV/AIDS newcomer communities. These agencies support newcomer populations from across the city that come to East Downtown Toronto to have their specific service needs met.

Many settlement service providers in the area are currently partnering and collaborating with other organizations to better meet the needs of newcomers. Some settlement services are also collaborating with mainstream services to better reach and support newcomers. Service providers indicated that this collaboration has led to a greater number of newcomers being supported in the area. While collaboration and partnership were identified by service providers as something that is working in East Downtown, they also indicated that improvements could be made to work more collaboratively with others locally (see Collaboration and Funding for more details).

Barriers to Service Access and Navigation

While services in East Downtown are effective at supporting most newcomers in the area, some service access and navigation barriers continue to exist. Some of these barriers are structural, and therefore more challenging to address in a service agency setting. Barriers to accessing services include outreach challenges, language barriers, structural barriers, cultural barriers, and challenges with referrals. Service providers indicated that more could be done to reduce barriers to newcomers accessing services.

Service providers and newcomers highlighted the importance of word of mouth in finding supports and services in East Downtown Toronto. This is most often through friends and family. Referrals from other service providers and internet resources were also identified by consultation participants as important connectors to other services. However, there was some frustration expressed by newcomers that felt that you needed to know the right people to get accurate information about services. Word of mouth can be an effective way of connecting newcomers to services, however, it tends to be inconsistent and inaccurate as people tend to refer based on their personal experiences of services. Word of mouth remains an unpredictable opportunity and barrier to service access. Service providers highlighted the importance of outreach to connect newcomers to services as often the stresses of settlement provide barriers to actively seeking services. Outreach can also alleviate some reliance on word of mouth to connect with services. However, some service providers identified a lack of staff time and resources to outreach directly to newcomers.

Despite having many linguistically appropriate services in East Downtown Toronto, there was an identified need to continue to reduce language barriers and a need for more resources to do this work. These barriers were specifically identified around some agencies' lack of resources for translation of written materials, and interpretation of services.

A lack of affordable childcare supports was identified by newcomers and service providers as a barrier to parents of young children accessing services. If the parent wishes to attend a service, they must weigh the benefits of the service against the costs of childcare. Challenges around childcare supports were identified specifically with LINC classes that have subsidized childcare for children over the age of 18 months. While this is helpful for parents of older children, it presents barriers for parents of young children in accessing language services.

Stigma is an issue for accessing some services (namely mental health and HIV/AIDS) amongst some newcomers' ethno-cultural communities. According to some service providers, this has led to some newcomers not accessing services because of a stigma associated with those services in their country of origin.

The process of referrals was also identified by service providers as a barrier to accessing needed supports. Information on services can be inconsistent from agency to agency requiring repeated and sometimes fruitless efforts. Referrals are not consistently followed up with by service providers to ensure that the newcomer received the supports they needed. Service providers indicated that follow up with referrals is not carried through as often as needed because of a shortage of staff time and resources. Repeated referrals are particularly challenging for newcomers as they require repeated intakes and repeated efforts to recount detailed information about their experiences. For those newcomers that have been victims of torture or have had stressful experiences leading to their arriving in Canada, the process of referral can force newcomers to relive potentially traumatic experiences.

Structural barriers identified by service providers in East Downtown Toronto include challenges of getting access to benefits such as Ontario Works, and healthcare. Some service providers sensed that some doctors were unwilling to accept Interim Federal Health Certificates from refugees. Other services were

also challenging to access because of a need for proof of address and immigration status, which is difficult for newcomers with unstable or precarious housing and status situations.

Collaboration and Funding

Many service providers indicated that they cannot meet all of the needs of newcomers because of challenges related to funding, but rely upon referrals and information of other services to help meet those needs. It is these funding challenges that have often led to further collaboration between agencies. This low capacity to meet all of the existing needs of newcomers in East Downtown Toronto may become lower as service providers continue to serve a growing newcomer population in the area as well as newcomers that move outside of the East Downtown. More funding was identified by service providers as needed for more comprehensive outreach to newcomers, more language supports such as translated materials and interpretation, and specialized staff to work specifically with newcomer populations in a number of mainstream services.

Collaboration among East Downtown service providers was identified as leading to an increase in numbers of newcomers served, a greater variety of services and supports provided, and better referrals that all help meet the needs of newcomers locally. For agencies greater collaboration was identified by service providers as building capacity internally, creating awareness of opportunities and challenges, informing service providers of other services and supports being provided, reducing duplication of services, and leading to joint funding opportunities.

Service providers also identified challenges associated with creating sustainable and effective partnerships. Greater collaboration between service providers can increase staff workloads in a sector already stretched for resources. Some service providers identified lack of consistent communication, occasional focus on the organizational mandate over the needs of newcomers, and staff turnover as considerable barriers to working effectively in collaboration. Service providers identified the need to establish common goals even if mandates are different, recognize that different organizations have different work cultures, and balance the working commitments and responsibilities of different partners. Despite these challenges, service providers indicated that in the long term, further collaboration can lead to a better use of resources. However, sustainable and consistent collaboration will require additional support from the Local Immigration Partnership.

General Service Improvements

Newcomers are using a range of services in East Downtown Toronto. Many newcomers were appreciative of the services in the area for supporting them in their settlement processes. However, newcomers also identified some general areas for improvement. In consultation with newcomers, the issues raised about settlement services go beyond settlement to other mainstream services as well (including Health, Education, and Transportation).

Consistently, newcomers identified the need for more personal contact in the delivery of services. This was expressed by service providers and newcomers in the idea of having settlement workers that work one-on-

one with newcomers. This would involve a comprehensive network of supports for each newcomer and a more holistic approach to the issues that newcomers face. This was identified by service providers as being particularly helpful as a way of approaching services that have stigmas attached (mental health and HIV/AIDS). Newcomers identified a need for in-person orientation upon arrival to Canada that supports newcomers in accessing services and navigating government systems. The need for more personal service also includes warm referrals (as opposed to cold calls) that link staff who work closely across agencies and organizations, and share information effectively. This can help lessen potentially harmful impacts for newcomers that are forced to relive their experiences of arrival.

Service providers identified the need to establish common goals even if mandates are different, recognize that different organization have different work cultures, and balance the working commitments and responsibilities of different partners.

Newcomers and service providers identified the need for more accurate and up to date information from settlement agencies, better referrals between settlement agencies, better referrals between settlement agencies and mainstream services, and better awareness of what services and supports exist currently and what information is the most helpful for newcomers.

In terms of overcoming language barriers, service providers and newcomers identified the need for more culturally and linguistically appropriate services, and more access to interpretation services to occasionally support daily activities. Service providers identified the need for funding specifically for translation of materials and interpretation services.

Newcomers also identified the need to build social networks and get to know people in their linguistic or ethnic communities. This was seen as useful both to the connection to services and for economic development (such as finding work,

sharing skills, starting businesses). This could be accomplished through in-person group activities to exchange information and connect people to services as well as online forums.

In improving services for newcomers, many service providers identified a role for the Local Immigration Partnership to help facilitate improvements. Possible roles include the LIP supporting further collaboration by centralizing information, assisting in the establishment of partnerships, assisting with referrals, providing training workshops and networking opportunities between service agencies. The LIP could also serve as an advocacy organization especially for homeless and precarious status newcomers that face some of the greater challenges.

Collaboration among East Downtown service providers was identified as leading to an increase in numbers of newcomers served, a greater variety of services and supports provided, and better referrals that all help meet the needs of newcomers locally.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of concerns and recommendations have been highlighted throughout the document. The following is a summary of recommendations derived from the comments of consulted service providers, newcomers, and employers:

Personal Service Delivery

- More personal, one-on-one support for newcomers
- More holistic approach to client support that is sensitive to, and helps combat, stigmas associated with some services
- Orientation programs to help recent arrivals connect with services and navigate government systems and occasional daily activities
- More resources for outreach to newcomers, especially those not yet connected to the service sector

Specific Supports and Services

- Develop employment services that work specifically with newcomers in East Downtown Toronto
- More employment programs around maintaining employment and on-the-job skills training
- Set more realistic expectations of employment opportunities prior to, and immediately upon, arrival to Canada
- More employment supports about starting a business – including for senior’s populations seeking financial independence
- More resources for language supports including translation and interpretation of services
- More linguistically accessible services such as shelters and health
- Adjust language training to include speaking with a “Canadian accent”
- More housing workers
- More flexible eligibility requirements for users of language classes around access to childcare subsidies and other financial supports
- Housing service should be more responsive to the specific needs of each newcomer seeking appropriate housing
- More shelters in what are perceived as safer neighbourhoods
- More education about tenant rights
- Increased access to healthcare for the most recent newcomers and those with precarious status
- Better information about safe points of healthcare access such as CHCs and walk-in clinics where a health card is not always required
- Better access to family doctors and information about how to acquire one
- More holistic approach to newcomer support to reduce the effects of stigma
- More supports for newcomers to cover costs associated with transportation
- Better information about eligibility for continuing education in Canada
- More supports for newcomers seeking family reunification around informing newcomers of process and providing mental health supports

- More childcare supports to reduce barriers to newcomers associated with cost and time
- More social and recreation opportunities for senior to reduce social isolation
- Explore opportunities to reduce discrimination against refugees as a result of a Social Insurance Number starting with “9”
- More education with housing providers around discrimination and the impacts of discrimination on LGBT newcomers
- More supports for newcomers in the LGBT, HIV/AIDS and Francophone communities that have experienced discrimination
- Support the building of social networks for newcomers in their linguistic or ethnic communities

Collaboration

- Better collaboration between settlement services and mainstream services
- More resources to support staff time and effective collaboration between settlement services
- More accurate and up to date information about services from settlement agencies
- Better information about local services is especially important at the airport for newly arrived newcomers
- More warm referrals by having service providers personally contact another service provider prior to referral
- More resources and staff time to follow up consistently on referrals to ensure that the newcomers received the supports they needed

Role of the Local Immigration Partnership

- More education about the impacts of discrimination on newcomers
- More advocacy against discrimination of newcomers
- Local Immigration Partnership support further collaboration
- Local Immigration Partnership serve as an advocacy organization for the newcomers that face the greatest challenges

More personal, one-on-one support for newcomers;

More holistic approach to client support that is sensitive to, and helps combat, stigmas associated with some services;

Develop employment services that work specifically with newcomers in East Downtown Toronto;

Better collaboration between settlement services and mainstream services.

APPENDIX A

Focus Group Participant Criteria

The East Downtown Toronto Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) will be conducting the following focus groups/interviews for newcomers:

- 1 Newcomer Men (12 participants)
- 1 Newcomer Women (12 participants)
- 1 Newcomer Senior (12 participants)
- 1 Newcomer Youth (12 participants)
- 1 Newcomers living with HIV/AIDS (12 participants)
- 1 LGBT Newcomers (12 participants)
- 1 Francophone Newcomers (12 participants)
- 5 Interviews with Precarious Status Newcomers
- 4 Interviews with Employers in Toronto and the GTA

For the purpose of these focus groups, **“newcomer”** is defined as an individual who has been in Canada up to 10 years. This definition of **“newcomer”** includes, but is not limited to: sponsored family members, business immigrants, internationally trained professionals, internationally trained skilled workers, convention refugees, refugee claimants, government assisted refugees (GAR), temporary workers, live-in caregivers, foreign students who intend to stay in Canada and immigrants after becoming Canadian citizens that still need to access your services.

The definition of **“precarious status”** newcomers includes refugee claimants whose claims have been denied and/or in the process of appeal, family-sponsored immigrants who have separated from their spouses, and people who have entered the country on student, visitor, temporary worker visas/permits that have since expired.

Age:

- Newcomer Men & Women: 25-60 years of age
- Senior: 61 years of age & above
- Youth: 13-24 years of age
- HIV/AIDS: All age groups
- LGBT: All age groups
- Francophone: All age groups

Focus group participants should:

- Ideally, participants should speak some level of English, however, if this is not the case LIP staff will arrange for an interpreter with the assistance of the referring agency.
- Be from a variety of backgrounds, ethnicities, and experiences.
- Have a range of experiences based on number of years they have been in Canada.

Focus group participants should not:

- Be impaired or under the influence in any way
- Rude or abusive to other participants
- Dominate the entire focus group

Incentives:

- 20 dollars
- 2 tokens
- Refreshments

Recruitment Process & Agency Participation:

- 2-3 participants per agency.
- Agencies that provide employment services are kindly requested to recruit or suggest employers for interviews.
- Agencies can offer to host focus groups at their organization, however, in selecting focus group locations, LIP staff will try to spread all the focus groups throughout East Downtown Toronto to ensure equal access to a wide range of participants in the neighborhood.
- All participants will be referred to LIP staff that will screen them to ensure that they meet the necessary criteria.
- LIP staff will arrange for counselors to be on site in case participants need additional support during the duration of the focus group.
- All focus groups will be recorded by the facilitator.
- Consent and confidentiality forms will be forwarded to participating agencies.

APPENDIX B

East Downtown LIP – Newcomer Focus Group Questions

This focus group questionnaire consists of essentially 16 questions and a series of probing questions (marked by “i”) that are to be used only to guide the conversation to covering certain important information. Other words are included as “prompts” these are possible answers that it might be worth prompting people to respond in order to guide the conversation. The section on Service Needs and Access may cover a range of service topics including language, health, and employment. If for example, issues of health services are covered sufficiently in the Service Needs and Access section, it would be advisable to skip the Health section that comes later in the focus group. Questions and times are flexible.

Intro Script and Go Around (5 minutes)

General (15 minutes)

1. How did you first arrive in Toronto?
2. What were your expectations when you arrived in Canada? How were your expectations met or not met?

Services Needs and Access (30 minutes)

3. When you first arrived, what were the most important things you needed?
 - i. What information did you need?
 - ii. Where did you go/who did you turn to to get the things you needed?
 - iii. What challenges did you face in finding what you needed?
 - iv. What would have helped you deal with these challenges?
4. After you had been here a few months, what were your needs and priorities?
 - i. Where did you go/who helped you get the supports you needed?
 - ii. What challenges did you face at this point in getting the help you needed?
 - iii. What would have helped you deal with the challenges?
5. Did you use any of the settlement services that are available?
 - i. If no, why not? (prompt: Childcare, Transportation, Language, Knowledge of what was available)

6. What services/supports have you used to assist your settlement process?
 - i. How did you find out about these services?
 - ii. How helpful were they?
 - iii. How could they be improved?
 - iv. Are there services/supports you needed that weren't available?

7. What is the best way to let newcomers know about the services that are available? (prompt: outreach)

Language (15 minutes)

8. Some of you have talked about the language challenges you've faced. What role did these challenges play when you tried to use some of the services we've talked about?
 - i. What types of language supports have you received (prompt: language classes)
 - ii. Have you used interpreters?
 - iii. When would it have been helpful to have the assistance of an interpreter?
 - iv. How did you find these language supports?
 - v. How could service providers make it easier for newcomers to deal with language barriers?

Health (15 minutes)

9. We're going to talk for a few minutes now about healthcare. If you or a family member have a health issue, what do you do? Where do you go first for help? How do you know to go there?

10. Have you faced any challenges in getting the healthcare you need?
 - i. How many of you have a family doctor?

Employment (15 minutes)

11. We know that employment is a priority for many newcomers. What has your experience, or the experience of your family members been in trying to find employment?
 - i. Have you made use of any employment services?
 - ii. Are there services/supports you wish you had access to?
 - iii. How could employment services be improved?

12. For those of you who are working, what sorts of work have you found?
- i. What challenges have you faced on the job?
 - ii. How many of you need to commute to work?
 - iii. What kind of supports would help you reach your career goals?

Housing (15 minute)

13. Are you satisfied with your current housing situation? What would you like to see improved?
- i. Are you satisfied with the community you live in? What changes would you like to see?
14. How did you arrange your current housing? Did you have any problems arranging your housing? Did you access any housing services?
- i. If yes, how helpful did you find those services? How could they be improved? If no, why not?
 - ii. Were there services that weren't available that would have been helpful?

Wrap Up (10 minutes)

15. Looking back on your experience as a newcomer, what advice would you give to someone who had just arrived about how to get the best possible start? (prompt: upon arrival, after 6 months)
16. Is there anything you would like to add about what would make the settlement process better for newcomers to East Downtown Toronto?

East Downtown LIP – Precarious Status Newcomer Interview Questions

We're doing some work on behalf of the East Downtown Local Immigration Partnership to research how services and supports for newcomers can be improved. As part of this work we are speaking with newcomers, service providers, and other stakeholders to better understand the issues, priorities and support needs of newcomers.

Everything you say will be kept confidential and we will not be reporting on the names of people that we speak with. You can also feel free to not answer a question. The interview will take about 45 minutes to do.

(The definition of "**precarious status**" newcomers includes refugee claimants whose claims have been denied and/or in the process of appeal, family-sponsored immigrants who have separated from their spouses, and people who have entered the country on student, visitor, temporary worker visas/permits that have since expired.)

1. How did you first arrive in Toronto?

2. How did you end up with precarious status (non-status, undocumented)?

3. When you first arrived, what were the most important things you needed?
 - i. What information did you need?
 - ii. Where did you go/who did you turn to to get the things you needed?
 - iii. What challenges did you face in finding what you needed?
 - iv. What would have helped you deal with these challenges?

4. Did you use any of the settlement services that are available?
 - v. If yes, see question #5
 - vi. If no, why not? (prompt: Childcare, Transportation, Language, Knowledge of what was available)
 - vii. Has your status created challenges to accessing these services?

5. What services/supports have you used to assist your settlement process?
 - viii. How did you find out about these services?
 - ix. How helpful were they?

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- x. How do you navigate these services without documentation?
- xi. How could they be improved?
- xii. Are there services/supports you needed that weren't available?

Language

6. What role did language challenges play when you tried to use some of the services we've talked about?
- xiii. What types of language supports have you received? (prompt: language classes)
 - xiv. How do you use these services without documentation?
 - xv. How did you find these language supports?
 - xvi. Have you used interpreters?
 - xvii. When would it have been helpful to have the assistance of an interpreter?
 - xviii. How could service providers make it easier for newcomers to deal with language barriers?

Health

7. We're going to talk for a few minutes now about healthcare. If you or a family member have a health issue, what do you do? Where do you go first for help? How do you know to go there?
- xix. How do you use these services without documentation?
 - xx. Do you have a family doctor?

Employment

8. We know that employment is a priority for many newcomers. What has your experience, or the experience of your family members, been in trying to find employment?
- xxi. Have you made use of any employment services?
 - xxii. How do you use these services without documentation?
 - xxiii. Are there services/supports you wish you had access to?
 - xxiv. How could employment services be improved?
9. Are you working right now? What sort of work are you doing?
- xxv. How has your status impacted the kinds of jobs that you can get?
 - xxvi. What challenges have you faced on the job?
 - xxvii. Do you need to commute to work?
 - xxviii. What kind of supports would help you reach your career goals?

Housing

10. Are you satisfied with your current housing situation? What would you like to see improved?

xxix. Are you satisfied with the community you live in? What changes would you like to see?

xxx. Has your status led to any challenges in finding appropriate housing?

11. How did you arrange your current housing? Did you have any problems arranging your housing? Did you access any housing services?

xxxi. If yes, how helpful did you find those services? How could they be improved? If no, why not?

xxxii. Were there services that weren't available that would have been helpful?

Wrap Up

12. What other impacts has your status had on your life?

13. What would you say are the biggest misconceptions about undocumented or precarious status newcomers?

14. Looking back on your experience as a newcomer, what advice would you give to someone who had just arrived about how to get the best possible start? (prompt: upon arrival, after 6 months)

15. Is there anything you would like to add about what would make the settlement process better for newcomers to East Downtown Toronto?

East Downtown LIP – Employers Interview Questions

This is _____ from Public Interest. I'm calling because I'm doing some work on behalf of the East Downtown Local Immigration Partnership to research how services and supports for newcomers can be improved. As part of this work we are speaking with newcomers, service providers, and other stakeholders to better understand the issues, priorities and support needs of newcomers.

I'm hoping to speak with you about your experiences working with and hiring newcomers, and some of the challenges for newcomers in the current job market. The interview will take about 20 minutes to complete, and everything you say will be kept confidential.

Is this a good time to have this conversation, or is there a date and time that would be better?

1. What has been your experience of the process of hiring newcomers?
What was successful about the process?
What was challenging?
2. Do you have clear qualifications required for new employees?
How have newcomers had difficulty meeting those?
How have newcomers been successful in demonstrating the required qualifications? (*i.e. proving that they have the qualifications they say they do*)
3. In situations where you have hired newcomers, what has been good about having those employees?
What has been challenging?
Has your business benefited?
4. Do you have a policy to actively hire newcomers? (*Why/Why not?*)
5. What are some of the major challenges for newcomers:
Seeking employment?
Retaining employment?
Advancing to more senior positions?
6. What do you think would make it easier for newcomers to
Find employment?
Retain employment?
Advance to more senior positions?
7. What advice would you give organizations that help newcomers find employment?
8. What advice would you give employers considering hiring newcomers?
9. What advice would you give newcomers seeking employment?

East Downtown Toronto Local Immigration Partnership

Service Provider Survey

1) What types of services does your agency provide?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing/Shelters | <input type="checkbox"/> Health/Mental Health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment | <input type="checkbox"/> Counselling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education/Training | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Language | <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency/Crisis Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Settlement Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

2) Since when has your agency been providing serves in the East Downtown Toronto neighbourhood?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 10 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 31 – 40 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11 – 20 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 41 – 50 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 21 – 30 years | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 50 years |

3) What clientele does your agency provide services to?

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Women | <input type="checkbox"/> Seniors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Men | <input type="checkbox"/> LBTTQ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

4) In the last 2-3 years, approximately how many of your clients have been:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Permanent Residents: _____ | Canadian Citizens: _____ |
| Convention Refugees: _____ | Temporary Workers: _____ |
| Refugee Claimants: _____ | No Status/Other: _____ |

5) In terms of ethnic background, where do the majority of your newcomer clients come from (list top 5)?

6) Do you think that the newcomer population in the East Downtown Toronto area has changed in the last 2-3 years? If so, how? (i.e. country of origin, ethnicity, family composition, immigration status)

7) What are the major needs and priorities for East Downtown Toronto newcomers and have they changed in recent years?

8) How do newcomers find out about your services?

9) Do the majority of your clients live in the East Downtown Toronto neighbourhood?

Yes

No

If not, where do the majority of your clients come from?

10) What are some reasons for clients commuting to other neighbourhoods to receive services?

11) What are some barriers that newcomers experience in accessing services?

12) How can these barriers be addressed?

13) Do you feel that your agency at its current capacity is meeting the needs of newcomers that come through your door?

14) If not, what are some of the reasons for this?

15) Has your agency established any partnerships with other agencies in order to better serve newcomers?

Yes

No

If so, what partnerships does your agency currently have with other agencies?

16) How have these partnerships improved services to newcomers?

17) How have these partnerships affected agencies?

18) What are the barriers to working effectively with other agencies?

19) What can be done to support more collaboration between agencies in order to better serve newcomers and how can the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) further assist in this process?

20) What type of funding does your agency rely on to offer services to newcomers?

- Federal City Other
 Provincial United Way Specify: _____

21) What strategies does your agency use to address challenges related to funding?

22) What are some programs/services that your agency provides to newcomers that have successful outcomes?

23) What types of support would further promote successful outcomes for newcomers?

24) Are there some areas of concern that you hope the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) will address?

25) If so, do you have recommendations on how to properly deal with these areas of concern?

26) Are you the Executive Director of your organization?

Yes

No

If not, what is your position?

27) Do you have any additional comments?

The East Downtown Toronto Local Immigration Partnership would like to thank you for taking the time to fill out our survey.

The East Downtown Toronto LIP would like to thank the following member agencies who completed our survey and/or referred clients to participate in the focus groups:

- AIDS Committee of Toronto
- Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention
- Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture
- College Boreal
- Family Service Toronto
- Fred Victor Centre
- Metropolitan United Church
- Operation Springboard
- Regent Park Community Health Centre
- Ryerson University
- Salvation Army Gateway
- Salvation Army, Immigrant and Refugee Services
- Sherbourne Health Centre
- Sojourn House
- The 519 Community Centre
- Toronto District School Board
- Toronto Public Library
- Turning Point Youth Services
- Women's Health in Women's Hands
- Woodgreen Community Services
- YMCA of Greater Toronto

The East Downtown Toronto LIP would also like to thank all the newcomers for participating and sharing their stories in the focus groups and interviews.

East Downtown Toronto Local Immigration Partnership

What is Local Immigration Partnership?

Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) is a program developed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada in partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to strengthen the role of local neighborhoods in serving and integrating immigrants.

The East Downtown Toronto LIP has been created to support the objectives of the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement and complement efforts by Canada, Ontario and Toronto to improve immigration outcomes for immigrants and for Toronto as a whole.

LIP seeks to help communities put immigration on their overall planning agenda in order for communities to benefit from the successful social and economic integration of new immigrants. LIPs identify groups that coordinate and enhance service delivery to newcomers to avoid duplication and promote efficient use of resources.

LIPs also aim to provide a collaborative space for the development and implementation of sustainable local and regional solutions for successful integration of immigrants to Toronto.

The geographic boundaries for the East Downtown Toronto LIP have been established as North of Lakeshore, South of Bloor, East of Yonge and West of the Don Valley River.