

## WHAT IS THE PROVINCIAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY?

**A Collaborative Vision for Newcomer Integration in British Columbia: *Enhancing Partnerships in Immigration and Inclusive Community Development*** delivers key messages and evidence-backed insights to aid organizations in newcomer services with their outreach and partnership initiatives. It has three main takeaways/priorities:

- 1. Promoting Informed Public Perception of Immigration Realities**
- 2. Strengthening Local Communities as Key Contributors to and Participants in Newcomer Integration**
- 3. Enhancing Settlement Sector Visibility in Provincial Government Relations**

### KEY PRIORITIES:

**1. Promoting Informed Public Perception of Immigration Realities** - This priority area examines key elements of the public discourse on immigration in Canada and looks to address 4 common misconceptions:

*Misconception 1 – We simply do not have the capacity to accept so many new people*

- A substantial number of permanent resident admissions result from existing temporary residents gaining permanent status through in-Canada processing. This process is known as a “**two-step**” migration.
- 68% of B.C.’s total permanent resident admissions in 2023 were residents with prior temporary status.

#### **Rebuttal:**

Numbers alone do not paint the full story. While Canada, and by extension the province, has increased their overall permanent residents admissions, a significant portion of these admissions are temporary residents transitioning into permanent residents, i.e. individuals that were already living and working in the province.

*Misconception 2 – Reducing immigration will mitigate the housing crisis*

- While newcomers certainly play a role in housing demand, they are not responsible for the current housing crisis, nor will reducing immigration address the actual structural improvements needed to resolve it

- Other key variables that have led to the housing crisis we currently find ourselves in, the 2 most prominent being: **housing supply challenges** (e.g. zoning restrictions, prolonged permitting processes, and a shortage of construction workers) and **high investor demand**.

**Rebuttal:**

Canada does not have an immigration problem; it has a planning one. The country's current housing crisis was decades in the making and today's lack of affordable housing and low vacancy rates are the results of the lack of housing policies that addressed the needs of all members of society. In fact, newcomers are key factors in helping address certain challenges like a shortage of construction workers which is why Budget 2024 is looking to invest \$50 million over 2 years to streamline the Foreign Credential Recognition Program for health care workers and construction workers.

*Misconception 3 – Immigrants are a fiscal burden to Canadian taxpayers*

- The largest contributing factor to newcomers' economic impact is time.
- A study conducted by Haozhen Zhang, Jianwei Zhong, and Cédric de Chardon indicated that based on long-term income tax data, immigrants that arrive to Canada before the age of 49 consistently demonstrated positive fiscal contributions to the country.

**Rebuttal:**

There are several areas in which newcomers outpace the economic impact of the general public. With the vast majority of newcomers arriving as economic immigrants, students and temporary foreign workers, they bring skills and experiences that the province would quite literally be unable to function without. According to the 2023 B.C. Labour Market Outlook, new immigrant workers will contribute nearly half (46%) of the additional labour supply in the province over the next 10 years, a proportion nearly equivalent to that of young individuals entering the workforce (47%).

*Misconception 4 – Individuals granted permanent residence in Canada choose to stay indefinitely*

- Studies shows that 1 in 7 people who became permanent residents between 1982 to 2018 left Canada within 15 years of obtaining permanent residency
- Permanent residents that are not afforded economic opportunities are more likely to leave Canada which in turn places Canada's attractiveness to potential immigrants at risk

**Rebuttal:**

The longer that newcomers stay in Canada, the more their impact, economic and otherwise also increases. When facing barriers that limit their capacity to live and work in Canada (high cost of living, challenges in securing jobs aligned with education and training, housing affordability, etc.), newcomers are less likely to stay in the country. This pattern underscores the vulnerability of Canada's attractiveness to prospective immigrants amid increasing global competition for skilled individuals.

## **2. Strengthening Local Communities as Key Contributors to and Participants in**

**Newcomer Integration** - This priority area focuses on enhancing communication within local communities and creating opportunities for a diverse range of collaborators to actively engage in the conversation about newcomer integration.

- An approach that encourages collaboration beyond traditional settlement and integration services, actively welcomes the involvement of employers, various municipal agencies, and other community-based organizations
- First and foremost, newcomers settle in communities; and while municipalities are actively engaged in providing services and infrastructure for newcomer settlement, they have limited decision-making authority with regards to immigration governance
- Collaboration across ALL government levels, community organizations is essential towards addressing broader societal issues related to immigration.

## **3. Enhancing Settlement Sector Visibility in Provincial Government Relations** - The

primary focus of this priority area is to advocate for a significant role for the settlement sector in decision-making processes at the provincial level. We seek to better incorporate a newcomer lens to agendas across ministerial portfolios.

### *Why Consultation with the settlement sector matters*

- Recognize that the key challenges to successful newcomer integration surpass the traditional scope of settlement services and related policies and require intersecting systems (across different levels of government AND different government ministries)
- The settlement sector which serves as an intermediary between governmental policies and the experiences of newcomers offers a unique viewpoint on these intersecting systems influencing newcomer integration

### *Settlement Sector Asks*

- Establishing clear, measurable deliverables and targets that incorporate a newcomer perspective
- An opportunity to better understand how policies and programs aim to mitigate the challenges facing newcomers
- A dedicated government representative or committee focused on immigration at the provincial level.