



Hamilton Immigration
Partnership Council



Hamilton's Newcomer Services: Mapping the Present, Visioning the Possible

— MARCH 2020 —



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Hamilton's Newcomer Services: Mapping the Present, Visioning the Possible

Prepared by HIPC Staff and McMaster Commerce 4SG3 student team

About this Report

Initiated by HIPC's Coordination of Services Committee, this project was driven by the question of whether Hamilton's newcomers would benefit from the addition of mobile services. The starting point was to increase our understanding of where newcomers live with respect to where services are located. To this end, HIPC staff undertook an engagement exercise with local service providers to identify newcomer-focused services and then worked with a student team from McMaster to categorize and map these services. HIPC staff also examined alternatives to the predominant 9-to-5, in-person model of service delivery for newcomers, including examples from settlement services in other cities and from various local service providers.

In recent years, new methods of service delivery have been promoted for healthcare and other social services for rural and northern communities, and increasingly for settlement services. With the COVID-19 outbreak this spring and requirements for physical distancing, the need for new models has suddenly become urgent. Settlement services are being rethought and redrawn even as this report is being written. It is hoped that this report will play a small role in stimulating local conversations to improve access to services for newcomers.

Acknowledgments

This report was truly a group effort, and thanks are extended to all contributors. Local service providers contributed descriptions of their programs in August 2019. HIPC staff member Laura Archer completed the scan of local settlement services and wrote the first draft of this report. McMaster Professor Brent McKnight arranged for a student group to complete the mapping exercise during the Fall 2019 semester. Those students were Jillian Jones, Andre Grougrou, Katarina Spanovic, Irene Chan, and Maheen Idrees. Layla Abdulrahim Moore offered feedback on the draft report. HIPC Senior Project Manager Sarah Wayland pulled these pieces together into the final draft.

Executive Summary

This project was undertaken with a view to better understand the need for mobile settlement services in Hamilton. In order to understand this need, the research team identified where newcomers live in the city, where newcomer services are currently located, and then completed a mapping exercise to see how closely these are aligned.

In Hamilton, the largest populations of newcomers can be found in the central lower city, roughly from Queen Street to Ferguson, and in Riverdale near Centennial Parkway. As immigrants become more established, many disperse to other areas, especially to the Meadowlands section of Ancaster and the upper city (“Hamilton mountain”).

To map newcomer services, a McMaster student team divided services into six categories: Language Supports, Employment Support, Healthcare, Education, Citizenship & Navigation Systems, and Recreation & Community. They then mapped service according to type. It was found that Hamilton’s newcomer services are concentrated in the downtown core, with some satellite services in Riverdale. There are also a few service locations on Hamilton mountain. In examining the map of newcomer-specific services in relation to where newcomers live, most services appeared to be appropriately located in or near to areas with the highest density of newcomers.

Despite the overall congruence of newcomer and newcomer-specific service locations, some newcomers do live in other parts of Hamilton that lack any easily accessible settlement services. Opportunities were identified to expand the reach of settlement and language services into other areas of the city where newcomer populations are increasing. Alternative models of service delivery were examined, both from settlement services in other cities and from various local service providers.

These models include online learning, pop-up services in new locations and outside of normal business hours, and community-based multiservice hubs. Over the past decade, a demand for multiservice community hubs was identified in consultations on newcomer services in Hamilton. In March 2020, with the sudden need to transition from routine service provision due to concerns related to the Coronavirus pandemic, settlement service providers worked quickly to create various forms of online service provision. These may gain traction in the long run.

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Introduction

Newcomers often rely on settlement services to help them adjust to their new communities and to living in Canada. These services include orientation and system navigation support, language instruction, pre-employment training, job search support, and more. To be effective, services must be accessible, both in terms of physical accessibility (that is, easy to access via public transit as well as located in proximity to where newcomers live) and eligibility criteria.

Focusing on physical proximity, the Coordination of Services Committee of the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council (HIPC) became interested in the idea of a mobile services model that could help newcomers learn about and access needed services. A mobile services model refers to bringing services to the people/community. This can be in the form of a “pop-up hub”, which could take the form of temporary relocation of multiple services under one roof or of a physical mobile unit that can be driven to various locations, such as a bookmobile or a health screening bus.

Other models for increasing accessibility include (1) remote or online services that are available to anyone with an internet connection and (2) a community hub. In a community hub model, multiple services are brought together in one location to meet local needs. Services are co-located, that is, they are offered in one, static location shared by various service provider organizations.

To determine the need for mobile, remote, or co-located newcomer services, we started by increasing our understanding of where newcomers live with respect to where services are located. To this end, HIPC staff undertook an engagement exercise with local service providers to identify Hamilton newcomer-focused services and then worked with a team of students in a McMaster 4th year Integrated Business and Humanities course to categorize and map these services.

As immigration patterns change, is the current location of newcomer services still optimal? Are services located in close proximity to most newcomers? Taking the opportunity to assess where newcomer-specific services are located and comparing this information with data of where newcomers live provides insight into how services may need to expand. If the newcomer population is expanding geographically and density areas are changing, Hamilton service providers may need to open satellite offices to adequately serve appropriate populations.

This report examines mobile hub feasibility as well as potential recommendations for program additions or future considerations. This report is intended to begin the conversation of how to enhance service coordination and improve access to services, with consideration of mobility of services being a primary focus in increasing newcomer access to and uptake of services.

Scope and Definitions

The federal and provincial governments allocate funding for newcomer-specific services that address needs in the first years after immigration. Most of these organizations receive funding from Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and to a lesser extent the Province of Ontario and other funders. Each community has some opportunity to design programming to meet their needs.

Newcomer services are services designed specifically for immigrants and refugees. Newcomers may also access many services that are not offered exclusively to this population, for example mainstream employment supports or health care. These are beyond the scope of this project. Generic services that are open to the general population are not considered to be newcomer services and are not included in this report.

In this report, newcomers are defined as people who immigrated to Canada within the past five years. These are the largest consumers of settlement services. Once an immigrant or refugee acquires Canadian citizenship, which for most people requires three years of permanent residency in Canada plus language proficiency in an official language, they are no longer eligible for most settlement services. When 2016 Census data is referenced, newcomers are defined as arriving between 2011 and 2015.

Where Newcomers Live in Hamilton

Hamilton is the third largest metropolitan area in Ontario with an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 newcomers arriving annually. The City of Hamilton is divided into 15 Wards, and detailed Ward-level information, including immigration details, is available through the [City of Hamilton Ward Profile](#) directory. Figure 1 is copied from HIPC's report [A Demographic Profile of Immigrants in Hamilton](#) and shows the immigrant population in each ward by percentage and period of arrival. Figure 2 offers a visual depiction of recent immigrant concentration in each ward and census tract.

As shown, the highest proportions of recent immigrants (those arriving between 2011 and 2016) were found in Wards 1, 2 and 5. Ward 1 spans the western part of the lower city, extending out to West Hamilton and including McMaster University. Ward 2 includes Hamilton’s downtown and north end neighbourhoods. Ward 5 is an urban area that sits below the escarpment to the east of the Red Hill Valley, with immigrants concentrating in the Riverdale neighbourhood.

Figure 1: Immigrant Status and Period of Immigration by Ward, City of Hamilton

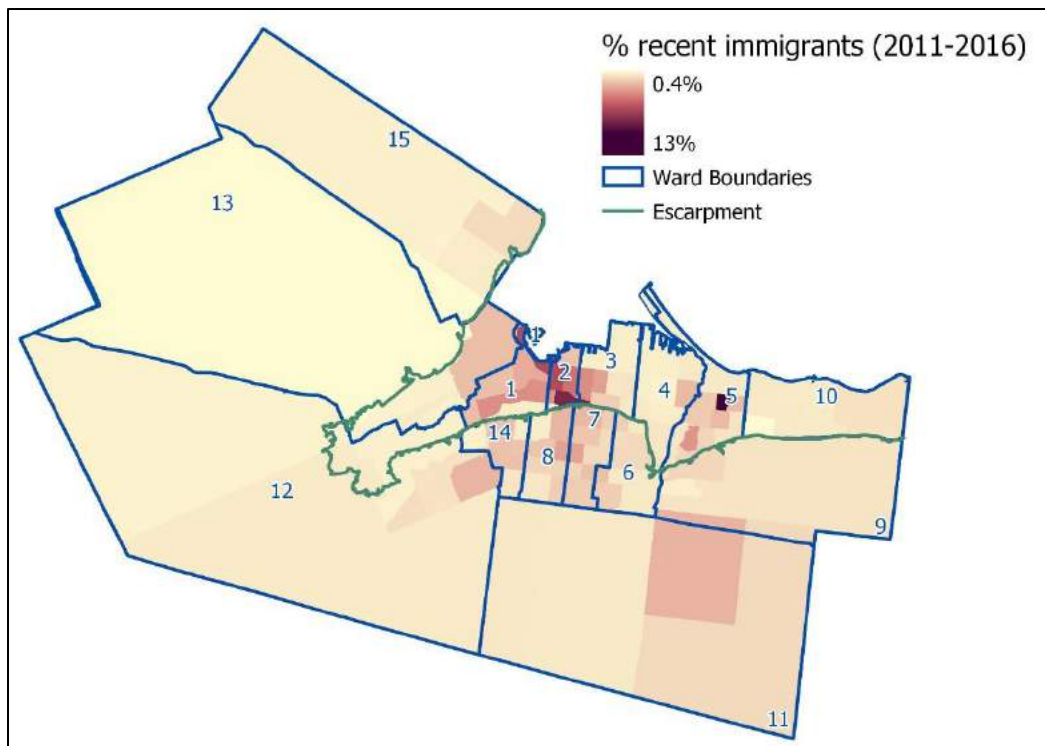
	Immigrant status and period of immigration				
	Non-immigrants	Immigrant - before 2001	Immigrant - 2001 to 2010	Immigrant - 2011 to 2016 (recent immigrants)	Non-permanent residents
City of Hamilton	74.1%	17.2%	5.0%	2.5%	1.2%
Ward 1	69.7%	15.3%	6.0%	4.6%	4.4%
Ward 2	64.1%	17.2%	7.4%	6.8%	4.6%
Ward 3	79.1%	14.1%	3.3%	2.8%	0.6%
Ward 4	84.1%	11.2%	2.9%	1.3%	0.4%
Ward 5	64.4%	24.3%	5.9%	4.3%	1.0%
Ward 6	74.5%	17.9%	5.3%	1.9%	0.3%
Ward 7	72.8%	18.0%	5.9%	2.6%	0.6%
Ward 8	69.9%	18.8%	6.7%	2.5%	2.1%
Ward 9	72.9%	17.4%	7.0%	2.1%	0.6%
Ward 10	70.1%	24.0%	4.3%	1.0%	0.5%
Ward 11	82.3%	13.6%	2.6%	1.2%	0.3%
Ward 12	75.4%	16.0%	5.7%	1.7%	1.2%
Ward 13	82.9%	13.8%	2.0%	0.8%	0.4%
Ward 14	68.0%	22.1%	6.7%	2.3%	0.9%
Ward 15	84.4%	11.5%	2.5%	1.2%	0.4%

*Note: the above table reflects Ward boundaries as of 2016

The concentration of recent immigrants in Hamilton is shown in Figure 2 below. In terms of absolute numbers of recent immigrants, several neighbourhoods stand out: Corktown and Durand East, Riverdale, Strathcona and Central, Landsdale, and Beasley.¹ Each of these neighbourhoods contains large market rental apartment buildings, and some contain social housing as well. Four of these five neighbourhoods are found in Hamilton’s central lower city.

¹ For access to this data, please contact HIPC directly.

Figure 2: Concentration of Recent Immigrants (2011-2016) by Ward and Census Tract, City of Hamilton



Newcomer Services in Hamilton

Prior to 2011, Hamilton had a settlement organization that provided most immigration and settlement services and was centrally located in the lower city. When this organization closed suddenly, services were distributed to an array of other service providers. Today, settlement services are scattered around the city, with a concentration in Hamilton's downtown.





A scan of current newcomer services was conducted for this report, and HIPC partnered with a team of students enrolled in McMaster University's *Sustainability: Corporations and Society* Commerce course to map these services. This section of the report draws largely on the student work.



The list of services mapped by the students is not completely exhaustive, but it is quite comprehensive. The newcomer-specific services mapped by the student project included services from YMCA, Immigrant Working Centre, Wesley, Hamilton Wentworth District School Board and Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board adult language classes, Circle of Friends, College Boréal, Compass Community Health Centre, Urban Core Community Health Centre,

Refuge Community Health Centre, Neighbour 2 Neighbour, and Hamilton Public Library.

The students grouped services into these categories: Language Supports, Employment Support, Healthcare, Education, Citizenship & Navigation Systems, and Recreation & Community. Services within each category were then mapped. Thus, some organizations may be found on multiple maps. For example, the Immigrants Working Centre provides employment services as well as English communication classes and citizenship test preparation. These services were divided into separate categories and shown separately.

Figure 3: Settlement Service Categories

Service Category	Icon	Specific Services Offered Under Category
Citizenship & Navigation Systems		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canadian citizenship classes/preparation courses • General newcomer information sessions/events • G1 driving test preparation • ID clinic • Health card kiosks • Systems Navigation for Healthcare
Language Support		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English as a Second Language (ESL) classes • Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) courses • English Language Assessments (CLARS) • English Language learning and tutoring • Conversation Circles • English for Seniors
Education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathways to Education • One on One Tutoring (mobile) • Computer courses
Healthcare		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary care • Health education • Maternal/child clinics • Multicultural health services • Mental health support, social work and counselling

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OBS/GYN and midwifery support • Oral health • Disease management
Employment Services		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupation-specific language training • Bridging programs • WorkLINK • Pre-employment support • Professional Accreditation/Trade certification resources
Recreation & Community (Other)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community fitness groups • Cooking groups/classes • Children's clubs • Early years programming • Community Connections • Volunteer program • Anger management groups • Life lessons parenting program • Mentorship programs

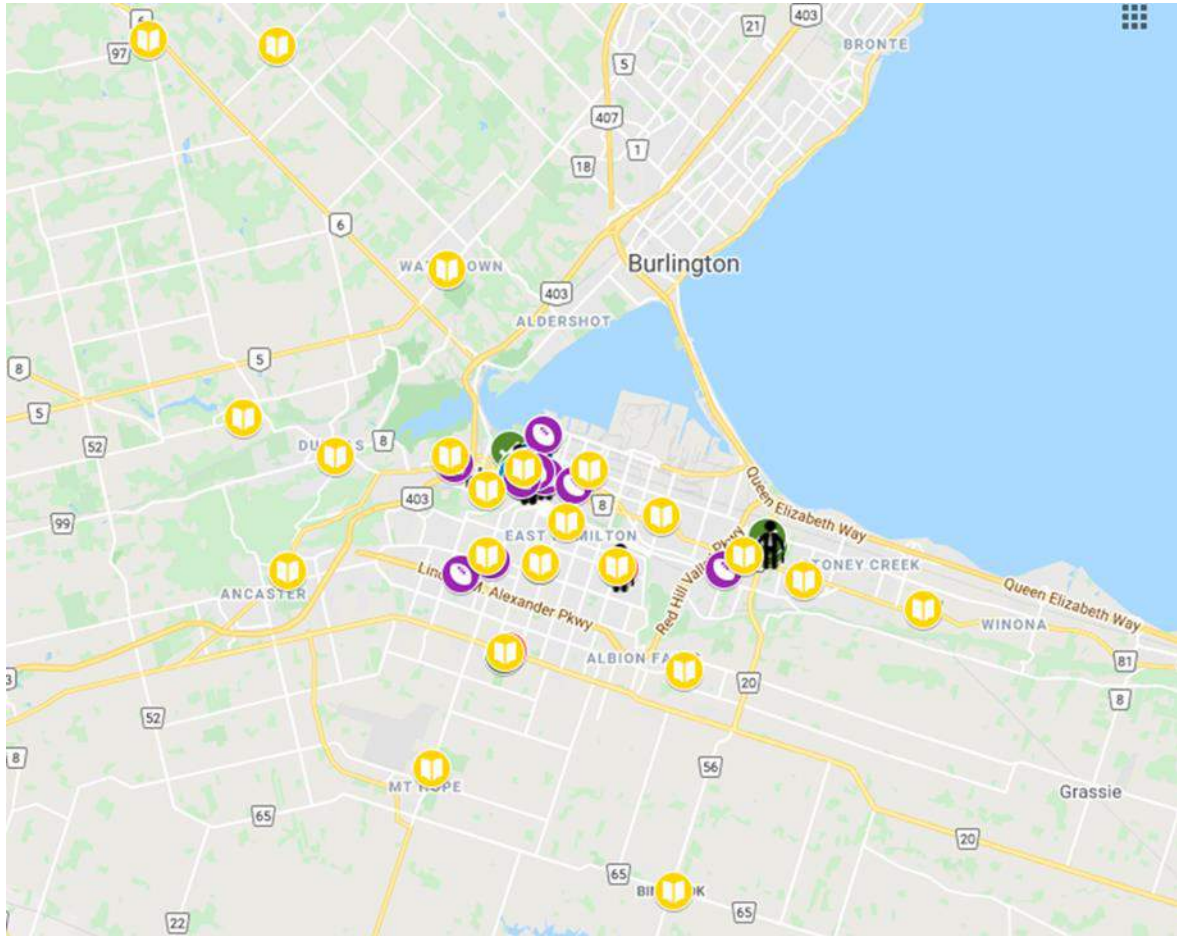
The students developed an interactive tool using My Maps feature of Google.² Below, screenshots show the mapping of services across Hamilton. Figure 4 shows all the services congregated on a single, layered map, with lower layers obscured in high service locations. A quick glance reveals that services are concentrated in Hamilton's downtown core with some services offered in outlying areas.

Subsequent sections of this report show each layer of service category. Each of these sections was largely authored by the McMaster student team. They include a list of service providers, specify how services are currently delivered, and make recommendations for future service delivery. The information is accurate as of November 2019.

The recommendations regarding potential service delivery for future program planning, however, are not intended to be exhaustive. Those recommendations, as well as the examples included in the Discussion section of this report, can meet the needs of newcomers who are not located in the centralized downtown or have less ease in accessing the downtown core of services.

² This resource is not public-facing, but access can be granted through the HIPC office.

Figure 4: Settlement Services, All Categories, Hamilton



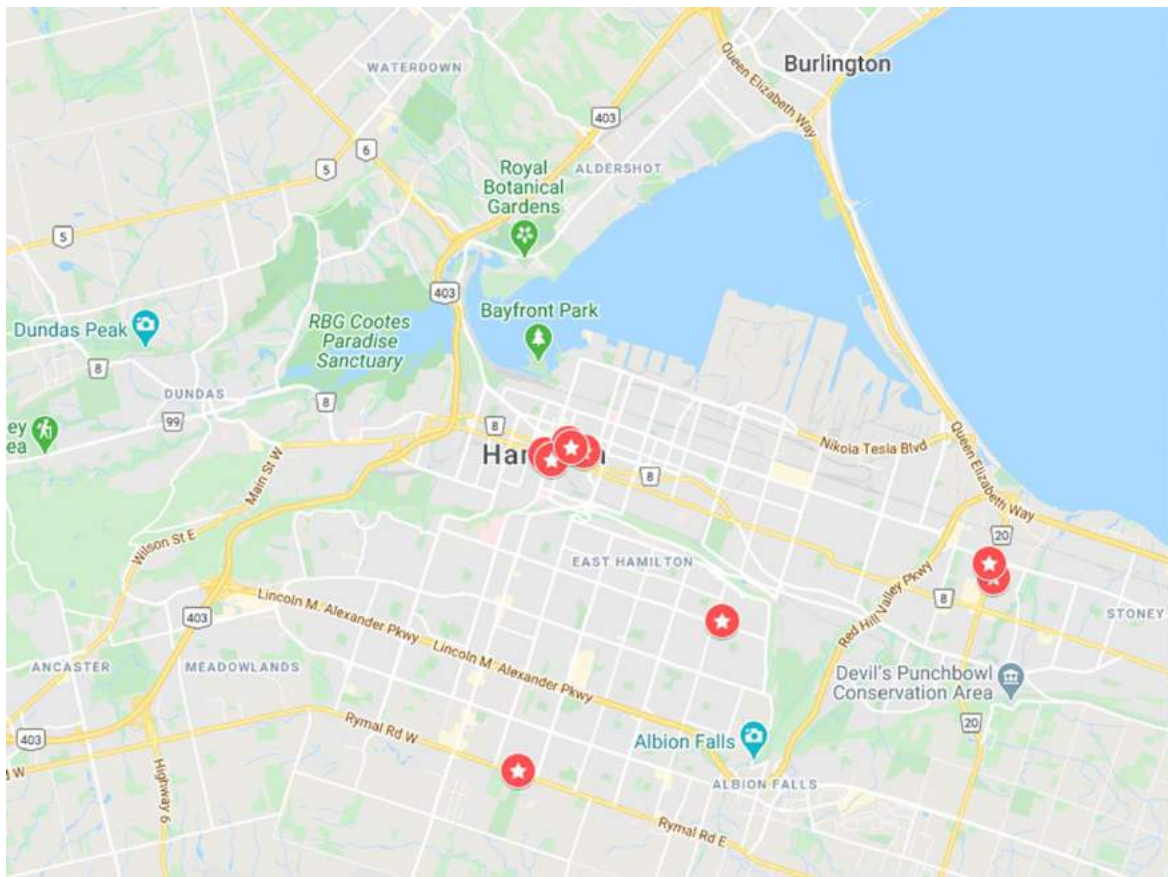
CITIZENSHIP & SYSTEMS NAVIGATION

Obtaining information about services and supports is vital for newcomers. Due to language and other barriers, systems can be difficult to navigate and both assistance and education is necessary to help recent immigrants navigate the services available to them. Eventually, the long-term goal of most landed immigrants and those holding permanent residence is to obtain citizenship, so this service is vital for their success as future Canadians.

Providers: Government of Canada website, IRCC (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada), Hamilton Citizenship Office.

Recommendations for service delivery

1. Seminars and classes
2. Information hotlines and online resources
3. Pamphlets handed out at establishments that newcomers frequent
4. Providing services in the native language of the immigrant group



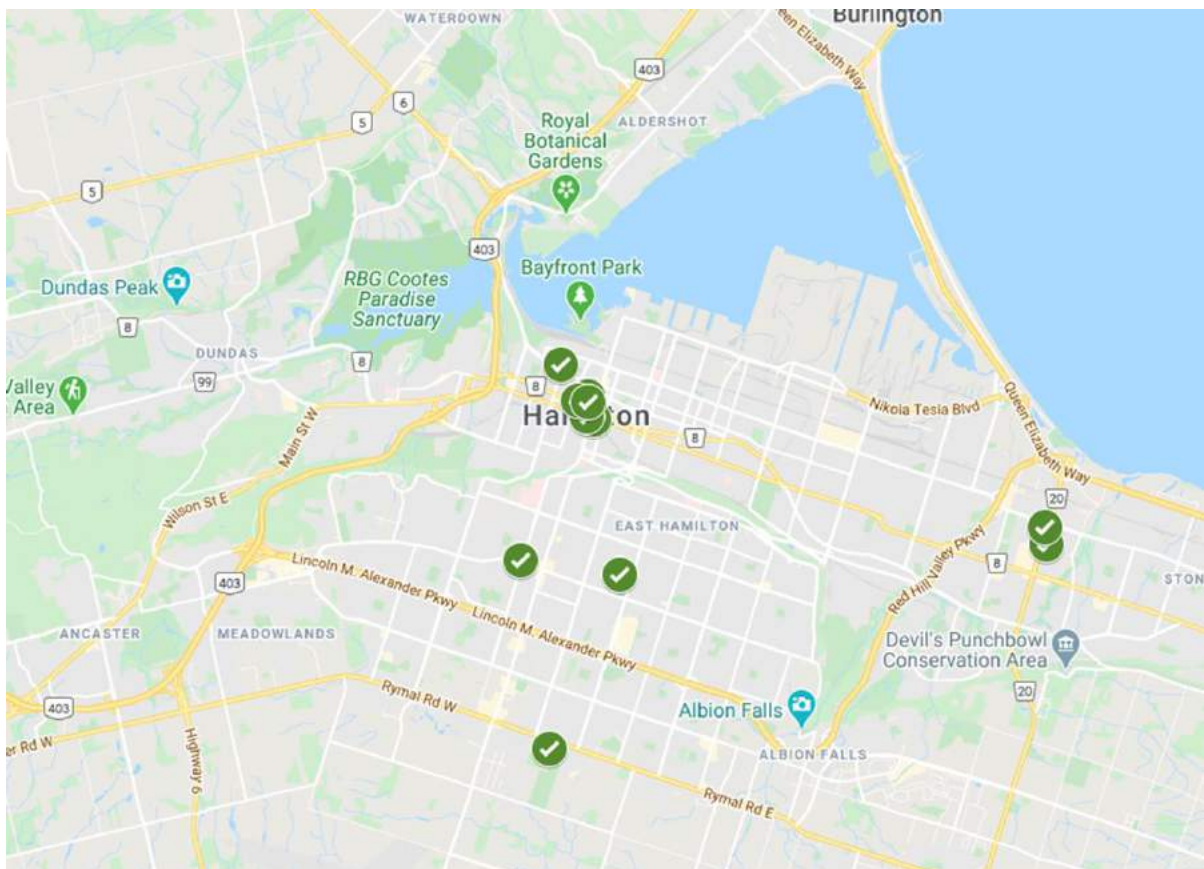
LANGUAGE SUPPORT

Language instruction is provided to newcomers through ESL & LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) classes at a specific site. Conversation Circles and other English classes are held in public places like the Hamilton Public Library. One-on-one tutoring is available at any HPL branch upon request.

Providers: Circle of Friends, College Boreal, Hamilton Public Library, Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board, Immigrants Working Centre, YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford, Mohawk College (not pictured)

Recommendations for service delivery

1. Smartphone applications that allow for ESL participation and/or conversation practice with others learning English
2. Option to take online blended-learning programs that would provide both in-class instruction as well as online components to learning
3. Use of Duo Lingo application or creating an entirely new mobile platform to address specific Hamilton needs



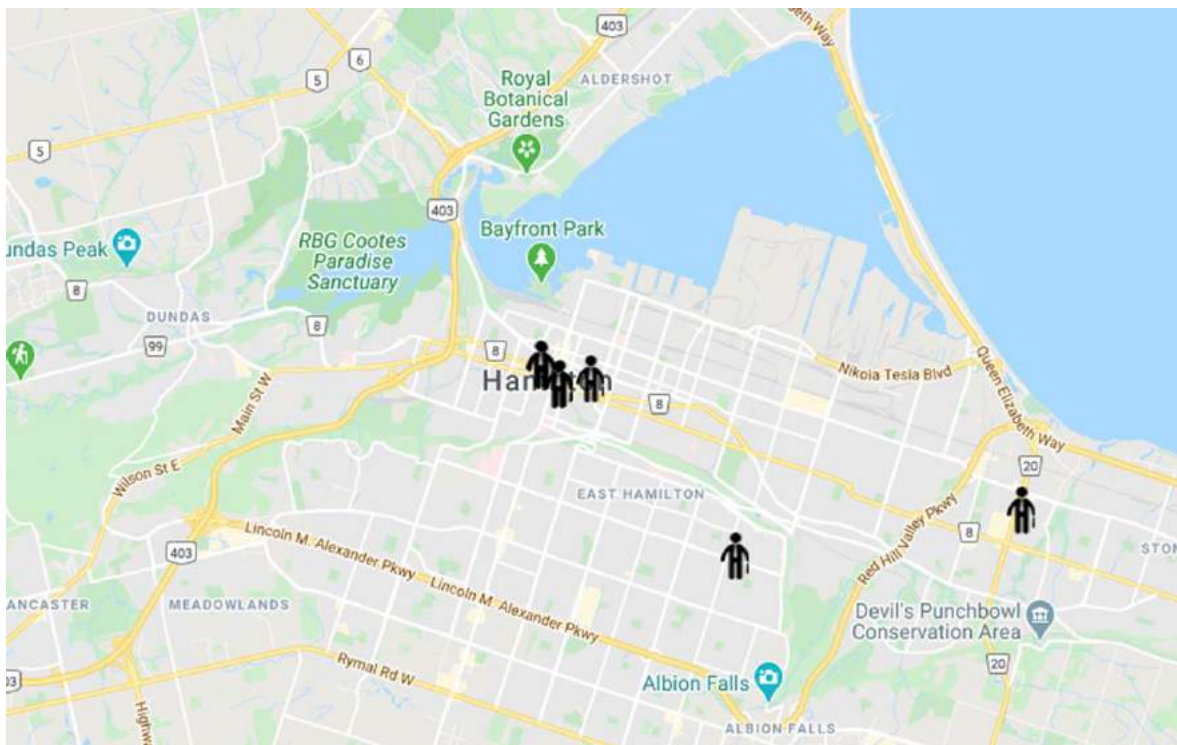
EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Employment supports include pre-employment training, job search workshops, professional accreditation/trade certification resources, bridging programs, occupation specific language instruction (OSLT) programs, and more. Currently these employment services are held at various locations across the greater Hamilton area.

Providers: Immigrants Working Centre (multiple locations), Wesley, College Boréal, Hamilton Wentworth District School Board, YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford.

Recommendations for service delivery

1. Increase online participation and interactivity options
2. Provide easy-to-find and accessible links to sources that present information regarding Canadian-specific credential transfer requirements
3. Partner with community centre representatives and host bi-monthly or semi-annual pop-up workshops or fairs



RECREATION & COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING



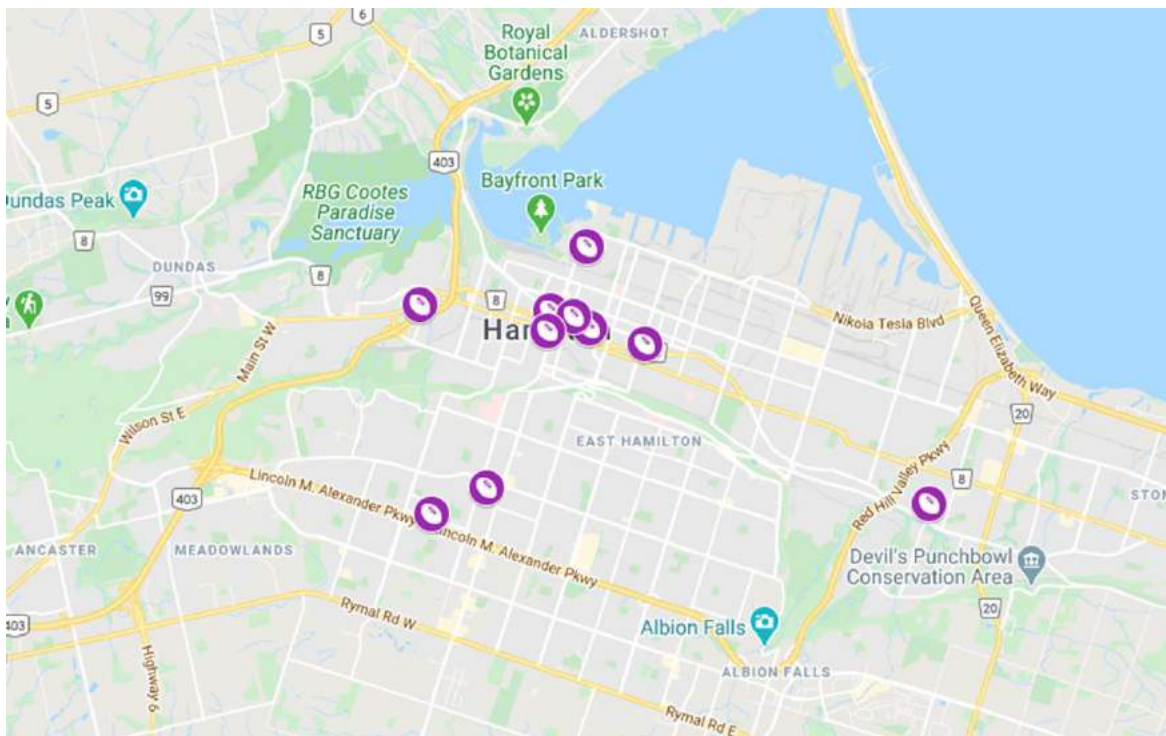
These initiatives are particularly important in the realm of settling into a new city because they instill a welcoming feeling and also allow newcomers to recognize their importance within Hamilton. Hamilton thrives when newcomers enrich the community with unique knowledge, culture, and skills.

Modes of delivery are specific to each program/event. Typically each initiative requires a series of meetings that are held at multiple locations.

Providers: Compass Community Health Centre, Hamilton Public Library, Immigrants Working Centre, Urban Core Community Health Centre, YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford

Recommendations for service delivery

1. Maintain face-to-face interaction to maintain the relationship building
2. Use applications such as Facebook and What'sApp to promote programs and create participant groups within ongoing programs



EDUCATION

Education courses for newcomers mostly consist of computer learning and tutoring for youth and adults. Much like the other services, these are generally provided face-to-face and in-person. However, one key difference is that it does not necessarily demand in-person interactions on a continuous basis.

Providers: Hamilton Public Library offers a space where students and tutors can utilize and hold sessions, as does Immigrants Working Centre and the YMCA Hamilton/Burlington/ Brantford.

Recommendations for service delivery

1. Online audio and video platforms are especially suited to one-on-one interactions, and software options are growing. These combine personal services with ease of access, but students must have access to appropriate technology.
2. Online audio and video platforms may also be suitable for group instruction and interaction, as long as instructors are comfortable with using relevant software, and access to technology exists.



HEALTHCARE

Community Health Centres conceive of healthcare broadly, taking into account the importance of social and economic factors to people's health. This recognition of social determinants of health is reflected in their programming.

Providers: Compass Community Health, Urban Core Community Health Centre, Refuge: Hamilton Centre for Newcomer Health

Recommendations for service delivery

1. Providing more mobile clinic options. The McMaster student project identified some of the areas with gaps in services based on postal code noting a number of facilities are located primarily in the L8L, L8R, L8P & L8N areas. The L8K region (similar boundaries to Ward 5) has no facilities, yet it has the highest newcomer population density. This indicates a potential opportunity to open a mobile hub for healthcare services within the area.
2. Connecting with family doctors who may speak immigrant languages



Findings and Discussion

LOCATION OF NEWCOMER SERVICES

Overall, newcomer-specific service appears to be appropriately located in or near to areas where the highest density of newcomers exists. The majority of newcomers are located in or near the current service providers, notably in Wards 1, 2, and 5. There are likely multiple factors that continue to drive newcomers to the downtown core as well as Ward 5 due to the latter's high immigrant concentration, both currently and in recent decades.

Despite the alignment with proportion of newcomers in these areas and current service providers, some other wards have a significant proportion of newcomers but little to no newcomer-specific service and program offerings aside from some outreach services of the Community Health Centres. Two wards -- Wards 3 and 14 -- have a representation of newcomers similar to the city average of 2.5% but lack any service providers within the ward boundaries. These wards are adjacent to Wards 1 and 2 and include public transit bus lines that connect to the downtown. In contrast, Ward 12 (Ancaster and the Meadowlands) also has a significant number of newcomers, but public transit to the downtown core is not as robust.

Various factors can impact a newcomer's ability to access or partake in settlement services. As such, even in areas where transportation to the downtown core may be relatively simple to the onlooker, the acts of learning transit routes, getting childcare, addressing physical accessibility needs, and other factors add additional impetus to support the creation of new service models that increase accessibility. In the case of mobile services or community hubs, these should be located in areas of high newcomer concentration as well as in areas where residents are known to have levels of need. Such populations would particularly benefit from having services come to them.

In examining the map of newcomer-specific services in relation to where newcomers live, it is apparent that there are some opportunities to expand the reach of settlement and language services specifically into some other areas of the city.

NEW POPULATIONS IN SEARCH OF SETTLEMENT SERVICES

The number of migrant workers living in rural Hamilton continues to grow, including seasonal agricultural workers. Although their temporary immigration status renders them ineligible for most settlement and language services, this

group could benefit significantly from varying supports to ensure their time in Canada is comfortable as well as ensure they can express their needs, navigate their towns, and know their rights. Anecdotally, many migrant workers access supports offered at Hamilton Public Library locations in the city's more rural areas. The libraries are not funded to provide settlement and language services specifically, but they offer ESL tutoring options available upon request through all locations. Several library branches offer English conversation circles.

Since immigrant attraction is a priority of the country and city, and policies are being adapted to try and make permanent residency an easier option for migrant workers, these rural locations may face increasing demand. Ensuring ease of access to service can reduce the isolation of these individuals and groups which would have a positive impact on their overall well-being.

International students are another population that could benefit from access to settlement services. Their numbers are growing quickly in Hamilton, and students have expressed the wish to access settlement services. They have Canadian educational credentials but often need support entering the Canadian labour market.

SERVICE DELIVERY ALTERNATIVES

The impetus for this project came from interest in the need for mobile or pop-up services to serve newcomers, but two other alternatives to in-office daytime services were identified as well in terms of increasing accessibility: (1) remote or online services that are available to anyone with an internet connection and (2) a community hub. In a community hub model, multiple services are brought together in one location to meet local needs. Services are co-located, that is, they are offered in one, static location shared by various service provider organizations.

Much social service programming is directed at those with immediate arrival needs and to immigrants experiencing multiple barriers to accessing employment. Newcomers who find employment often stop accessing services, even if they are underemployed. Learning and settlement services could be adapted to support the underemployed, to help them increase their language capabilities and other skillsets. Alternative modes of service delivery could provide greater autonomy and opportunity to immigrants who are employed but perhaps seeking support and learning options that are more accessible on their own time and outside of their working hours.

There is little research readily available regarding the concept of making social services, particularly newcomer services, into a mobile format. The most comparable sector might be that of healthcare, which has seen significant success in health buses and community mobile vans. Mobile services help those who otherwise have difficulty accessing or reaching traditional locations for service. A similar example is that of the library bookmobile which follows a set schedule to be open in areas not proximate to a library branch.

Below are examples of remote or online services as well as mobile and pop-up services. Several examples of alternative service delivery were identified in this research. They are presented below.

Online Learning

English Online (shown below) is an example of a successful online language and settlement platform used in Manitoba, with its primary objective aimed at ensuring newcomers in more rural and isolated areas can access supports.

Program information housed at <http://myenglishonline.ca/>

The screenshot shows the homepage of the English Online website. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for 'Our Programs', 'Our Impact', 'Get Involved', and 'About Us'. The main content area features a header with the text 'Serving New Canadians' and a sub-header 'About our Live & Learn Program'. Below this, there are three circular statistics: '1600+ Registered learners', '300+ settlement articles', and '20 workshops delivered each month'. At the bottom, there is a section titled 'What We Strive For' with a mission statement: 'To provide flexible and accessible services that enable newcomers to succeed and reach their full potential. We strive to address newcomers' unique needs for settlement and integration into the workplace and community through a comprehensive online environment.'

Mobile and Pop-up Services

Mohawk College City School Mobile Classroom is an example of a service that aims to reduce barriers for people to access education. It offers the opportunity for people to access free courses to enhance their skill set and make strides towards reaching their personal goals. City School has a physical mobile

classroom that travels to different communities to make connections with community partners and increase student involvement and access. A second mobile classroom was launched in Spring 2020.



<https://www.mohawkcollege.ca/programs/get-prepared-for-college/city-school-by-mohawk>

Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership (TNLIP) Pop-Up Hub

The concept of pop-up hubs is becoming more a popular topic of conversation in the social service sector. A direct example of this being implemented for newcomers comes from the TNLIP. With the help of various volunteers and community partners, the TNLIP has been facilitating this pop-up model in their community, targeting different groupings of newcomers as well as different neighborhoods (which can align with a mobile concept). Their model was highlighted at the 2016 Pathways to Prosperity national conference, and they continue to share learnings and insights into successes and challenges of this model. Many of the challenges they experience relate to staffing (both paid and volunteer) as these pop-up hubs are often operational on evenings and weekends. Additionally, they have worked to ensure that outreach and event promotion reaches the right people. They are keen on ensuring there is an understanding of the language needs, so the correct interpreters can be made available.

An overview of the TNLIP pop-up is described in the image below.

The Roll-out Phase

In spring 2016, after the successful implementation of the first six rounds of the pop-up hub, the task group decided to roll out the pop-up hub to the communities with high



concentration of newcomers and limited number of service providers. The first pop-up hub was conducted in October 2016 at The People's Church (TNLIP member agency) and was focused on refugees living in shelters and people without health insurance. Around 80 clients received various on-site health and social services. The health service providers included a physician, an ophthalmologist, a dentist, a

community oral health specialist, staff from family and sexual health services, an

immunization specialist, a team from the women's health centre, a mental health professional, nutrition and diabetes specialists and nurses performing screening and referrals. Community services included legal, settlement, housing and employment services. More than 80% of the clients rated the event as excellent. Dental, family physician and ophthalmology services were rated as the most useful. Interpretation was available in Mandarin, Hindi, Farsi, Urdu and Arabic.



community oral health specialist, staff from family and sexual health services, an



The pop up hub, which was piloted at the local food bank, resumed full-scale in October 2016, after the summer break. Services included health, settlement, legal, employment, library, parks and recreation and housing services. Around 110 clients including 30 Syrian newcomers were served in two rounds in October.

Community Hubs

Generally speaking, a community hub is a public space that brings several community agencies and neighbourhood groups together to offer a range of activities, programs and services.

[Langs Community Hub](#) in Cambridge, Ontario started as a community organization in 1978 and by 2011, it had evolved into community hub with more than 20 health and social services under one roof, plus a satellite location. This 66,000 sq ft space includes shared reception services and other amenities such as a full size gymnasium, a community kitchen, and shared meeting rooms.

According the Langs website, a community hub has several characteristics:

1. Addresses the social determinants of health
2. Involves the community in governance, setting priorities, program delivery and evaluation
3. Integrates partnerships that improve access to services, enable a larger impact on health and wellbeing, and maximize infrastructure
4. Builds on community strengths and increases capacity

5. Is flexible and responsive to the changing needs of the community
6. Is self-sustaining

At a minimum, a community hub provides access to a variety of services under one roof, as depicted in the graphic image below. To include newcomer services in such a hub would be particularly fitting in areas whose numbers do not warrant an entire agency or building dedicated to settlement services. The convenience of the one-stop shop and exposure to various programs and services are benefits of this model.



Discussion

In thinking about the three alternative models of service delivery considered in this report – mobile or pop-up services, remote or online, and community hub, until recently. Only the latter has had any history of consideration within local settlement services.

Over the past decade, research with newcomers in Hamilton identified confusion over how to access settlement services as well as the desire for a one-stop shop for services. Research conducted for HIPC by the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC) in 2016 noted the following: “many participants expressed frustration or confusion around what services they could access and called for greater coordination between services. The benefits of a centralized source for information about services were discussed by several participants.” The services discussed in the consultations included those provided by all levels

of government, including but not limited to settlement services. Participants in this research – newcomers as well as community leaders -- also developed a recommendation for a “newcomer hub,” a place within their own neighbourhoods to meet and support other newcomers, regardless of race, cultural background, religion, or gender. Timely settlement information and resources should be available.

In addition, research showed that newcomers wanted to receive assistance for a number of needs (legal, education, employment, housing, language, etc.) within one visit rather than visiting multiple agencies, which can be costly and time consuming. In this model, newcomers could be better connected to non-settlement services, programs, and institutions. It was felt that a community hub could help reduce social isolation, increase newcomer capacity, build newcomer involvement in the wider community, reduce dependence on service providers, and offer a complementary, more personalized and more intensive form of support to newcomers than most service providers are able to provide (SPRC 2016: 9).

Not long after the SPRC report, the Government of Canada identified similar needs as part of a national consultation. In their Consultations on Immigration Levels, Settlement and Integration (2017), the report also identified the benefits of a community hub approach for service delivery. The consultation report cites several systemic needs that could be met by the presence of a “one-stop” location with multiple services available to meet client demand, including building a common vision, blending or linking programs, being outcomes-driven and client-focused, and social integration and addressing systemic barriers. In this research, the location of services was not a main topic of discussion, but rather it emphasized the co-location of multiple services.

The Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership held a forum in 2017 to discuss promising practices in newcomer services. Hub models were discussed, with special mention being made to the change in many funding providers “increasing availability and flexibility of funds, funding partnerships and collaborations.” At that time, the Ontario Government was building resources to develop more community hubs.

This model features potential cost savings in terms of shared reception, shared meeting rooms. It could also boost collaboration and coordinated local planning as service providers might better understand each other’s organizations and programming and identify service gaps. Models that assist in this type of coordinated local planning naturally reduce the confusion for people new to

services as the intention is it would be easier to provide a “no wrong door” type of access to service.

Though it does not have as much history locally, there has been a very recent surge in interest and action in online services for newcomers. In March 2020, most service locations were physically closed to clients in an attempt to halt the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Service provider staff scrambled to find new ways to connect with clients, continuing to provide services over the phone or online wherever possible. This crisis is unfolding as this report is being completed, and it is too early to provide any kind of overview or assessment of the situation. It is certain, however, that new models are being developed, and it is hoped that some of them will last longer than the pandemic.

Conclusion

In conclusion, based on the 2016 Census numbers of where newcomers live in Hamilton and the current locations of the main newcomer-specific services, it appears that services are by and large located close to the highest density of newcomers. As the city continues to work to meet the needs of those living in Hamilton, service locations should continue to be reviewed with regard to newcomer residential patterns. In addition to physical proximity, policy makers and service providers should continue to review models of service delivery, including how to best meet the needs of newcomers and how to ensure newcomers have access to and uptake available services.

Hamilton is a growing community, and the focus for newcomer services has largely been on the downtown core. However, a significant area of Hamilton is more rural, and people continue to settle in those areas for varying reasons. Such trends in settlements should be monitored on the regular as the needs of newcomers in those areas should be better studied and understood. As well, new populations of people from overseas are arriving in Hamilton, and many foreign workers and international students would like to live in Canada permanently. Ensuring that they are able to access needed services will benefit their longer term success should they remain in Canada.

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About HIPC

The Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council (HIPC) is a community table whose members work together to create a positive settlement experience for newcomers. HIPC members represent settlement agencies, educational institutions, the private sector, municipal departments, persons with lived experiences of immigration, and more. HIPC is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and housed within the City of Hamilton's Economic Development Division.




HIPC's vision: Hamilton welcomes newcomers, celebrates diversity and is a place for everyone to call home.



**Hamilton Immigration
Partnership Council**

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