

# Niagara Region Global Attractiveness Committee Report

February 17, 2017

The Global Attractiveness Committee was created as one of the strategic priority groups within the Niagara Region's strategic goal to foster an environment for economic prosperity. The group was tasked with reviewing what Niagara needs to do to become a more welcoming community. This report is a summary of the Committee's findings and its proposed action plan.

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# Executive Summary

## 1. Introduction

Immigration is a key component in population growth and economic prosperity in Canada and this will continue to be a major driver for the foreseeable future. Indeed, the attraction and retention of skilled immigrants is increasingly recognized as an essential component in economic development planning. Immigrants shape and impact communities by adding skills to the existing local labour force, creating entrepreneurial opportunities and jobs, and increasing diversity, all of which boost the size and productivity of the local economy. Economic development professionals are recognizing that jobs are not the only attractor to a location; in fact jobs can and do follow people.

Niagara Region<sup>1</sup> currently has five strategic priorities to foster an environment for economic prosperity, one of which is “positioning Niagara globally”. With an end goal of growing its population and improving global attractiveness, a Global Attractiveness Committee was created with the aim to:

- 1) Review relevant information and conduct research to study how welcoming Niagara is to immigrants, and**
- 2) Develop a strategy with short, medium, and long term recommendations on how to increase Niagara’s attractiveness to immigrants.**

This report summarizes the work of the Global Attractiveness Committee through focusing on the themes of attracting and retaining immigrants. Immigrants to Canada are by definition mobile, and they are strongly influenced to move to communities where they see opportunities. They are also likely to live where they already have ethnic and family networks. Other attractors include the economic vitality of a community, its general reputation and name recognition, the presence of universities and other educational institutions, and proximity to larger urban areas.

**In this report a welcoming community refers to “a collective effort to create a place where individuals feel valued and included” (Esses et al., 2010:9).**

The presence of a welcoming community is essential for attracting and retaining immigrants. Being welcoming is especially important in smaller population centres which are often less accustomed to new residents. A welcoming community follows certain steps that attract and retain newcomers:

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<sup>1</sup> In this report Niagara Region or the Region (with capital ‘R’) refers to the corporation of governance, while Niagara region, the region (small ‘r’) or Niagara (without ‘region’) refers to the geographical municipality.

- identifying and removing barriers
- promoting a sense of belonging
- meeting diverse individual needs
- offering services that promote successful integration

This report examines demographic trends in Niagara, presents primary local research grounded in the relevant scholarly and policy literature, and concludes with a realistic action plan for moving forward on this vision. If resourced properly, actions identified in this report can help the region achieve its collective ambitious goal of positioning Niagara globally. Attracting and retaining immigrants to Niagara will require a robust combination of the above factors.

## 2. Current Immigration to Niagara

Recent trends indicate that Niagara has work to do to attract and retain immigrants in line with the population growth expectations of 610,000 residents by 2041 according to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. According to the 2016 Census, the population in Niagara was 447,888. Population growth in Niagara is under the provincial and national averages; for example, from 2011 to 2016 the population grew by 3.8 per cent compared to the provincial average of 4.6 per cent and the national average of 5.0 per cent.

**“Culturally diverse regions tend to be more entrepreneurial, particularly with respect to more knowledge-intensive activities”**  
(Rodríguez-Pose and Hardy, 2015:393).

Niagara has long been a region of immigration, but recent immigration has been trending downwards by both absolute and proportional measures. The total number of permanent residents who stated their intentions to reside in the region has significantly fallen over the last decade, declining by almost half: compared to 1,815 permanent residents in 2005, by 2014, only 950 incoming permanent residents stated their intentions to live in Niagara. Immigrants to Niagara comprised 1.3% of immigration to Ontario in 2005, but by 2014 Niagara’s share had fallen to 1.0%. This represents a proportional decline of 23%. In other words, immigration has fallen not only in absolute terms but also in proportion to the province as a whole.

A consequence of declining immigration is that Niagara’s own immigration population is not being replenished by younger working age immigrants. The immigrant population is aging, with fewer than one in ten of Niagara’s immigrants arriving within the past decade.

Despite challenges, Niagara has great diversity in its immigrants who come from dozens of source countries and arrive under a variety of immigration programs and immigration classes. For many years the region has drawn a large number of its

immigrants from the United States and the United Kingdom. Over the past decade, the other top countries of origin were Colombia, China, the Philippines and India.

Niagara receives all three main classes of permanent resident immigrants -- economic, family, and refugees/humanitarian, but it has relatively fewer economic class immigrants compared to the country as a whole. Niagara also hosts a significant number of temporary residents. Since 2004, the number of temporary residents has more than doubled in Niagara. More than two-thirds of these were international students, followed by temporary foreign workers (including agricultural workers and live-in caregivers).

### 3. Attraction and Retention Factors in Niagara

To get first-hand, local views on attraction and retention in Niagara, information was collected through surveys and focus groups. A survey was conducted with 157 Niagara Region employees, while PMA Brethour Group concurrently surveyed 354 new homeowners and builders in Niagara. Nine focus groups were held in July and October 2016 to gather input from various groups, including immigrants, international students, business owners, and service providers who work with immigrants.

Challenges:	Attractions:	Retention Factors:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited advanced educational and career opportunities.</li> <li>• Employment: lack of industry, absence of many large employers, nepotism, skills mismatch</li> <li>• Lack of visible minorities</li> <li>• Locals unaccustomed to religious and ethnic diversity,</li> <li>• Lack of ethnic stores, groceries and restaurants.</li> <li>• Childcare cost and access</li> <li>• Inadequate transit</li> <li>• Hard to make personal connections</li> <li>• Lack of current, single point of information for newcomers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendly community with nice people</li> <li>• Natural beauty</li> <li>• Affordability</li> <li>• Quality of life (peaceful and quiet with clean air and little congestion)</li> <li>• Proximity to the Greater Toronto Area and the US border</li> <li>• Support of family or friends already living in the region.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Community connections</li> <li>• Good place to raise children</li> <li>• Support system</li> <li>• Welcoming community</li> </ul>

Research participants cited a number of challenges related to living in Niagara. The most commonly cited challenges were the limited advanced educational and career opportunities. These were viewed as hindering both attraction and retention. In terms of employment, lack of industry, absence of many large employers, perceptions that nepotism is a common practice in hiring, and “skills mismatch” were all cited as challenges.

Many participants noted the lack of visible minorities in the region, stating that they felt conspicuous. Locals were seen as unaccustomed to religious and ethnic diversity, sometimes resulting in discrimination. A lack of ethnic stores, groceries and restaurants was also identified as a challenge, and it was acknowledged that local immigrant and ethnic populations are simply not big enough to support and sustain businesses that target specific immigrant communities.

Many of the challenges faced by newcomers are also faced by the Canadian-born population. Poverty, discrimination, unemployment, childcare, lack of job training, and inadequate transit are systemic issues that need to be addressed. For immigrants, these issues are often compounded by being new to a community as well as having a language barrier.

All participants stated that Niagara is a friendly community and that people are very nice. At the same time, participants stated that they did not have strong connections with Canadians, which delays community integration. Additionally, service providers and clients cited the lack of an updated, single location for information to newcomers.

Participants also identified many attractive features of Niagara. Several key themes arose, namely natural beauty, affordability, and quality of life. Niagara is viewed as a safe, peaceful and quiet community with clean air and little congestion. Good shopping was also cited, as was proximity to the Greater Toronto Area and the US border.

Immigrants identified several reasons for moving to the region, including the support of family or friends already living in the region. For a number of participants, Niagara was their first landing point in Canada. Although they had no prior connection to the region, they liked it and decided to stay.

Employment was a major theme that ran through all focus groups, both as a reason to stay and a reason to move elsewhere. Niagara was viewed as a great place to live provided that a person has a good job. Newcomers—particularly refugee claimants and their families—want to stay, put down roots, and establish themselves here. Despite their desire to stay, it was a decision they seem to constantly weigh against the perceived costs; and the risk that employment barriers may persist outside of Niagara as well.

#### **4. Next steps for success: The Action Plan**

Positioning Niagara globally is integrally related to improving opportunities within the four other Niagara Region strategic priorities of goods and people movement, innovation and entrepreneurship, building a job-ready workforce, and doing business differently. Each of these is part of an ecosystem that will attract and retain newcomers to Niagara, requiring a common vision and networks of support across the region.

Based on the evidence of primary and secondary research, three global attractiveness objectives are outlined to be undertaken with internal and external partners, each of which is supported by specific actions:



1. To support community readiness to be a welcoming region through engagement and fostering collaboration with key stakeholders using tailored information and data.
2. To improve Niagara's existing marketing and migrant/immigrant focused literature and create new marketing to attract primary and secondary migration from within Canada and internationally.
3. To support further implementation of concrete programs that will retain immigrants and international students.

These objectives cannot be achieved in a vacuum but rather must be undertaken as a part of broader regional action on three fronts: growing employment opportunities, relevant policy advocacy at the provincial and federal levels, and a robust data strategy to collect and monitor regional demographic information. This report will not focus on employment, the labour market or housing, as these are the focus of other priority groups.

Six tactics support the three objectives: stakeholder engagement, data strategy, improve access to local information, marketing plan, welcome and engage with newcomers, and advocate for inclusive workplaces and policies. The foundation of these objectives is stakeholder engagement and collaboration, as creating a formalized community structure for stakeholders to inform key decisions and implement these actions is essential for success.

Each of these tactics, in turn, is supported by suggestions of specific short, intermediate and long term actions, including: arrange a road show to visit the Local Area Municipalities; support events, activities and trainings that promote diversity and cultural sensitivity; explore available and timely data sources; revamp the Niagara immigration portal; implement a targeted marketing campaign in the Greater Toronto Area and abroad; and support workplace internship programs. See Figure 9 for a summary of all the recommended actions in this report.

## **5. Conclusion**

The timing of this project provides the opportunity to plan for the future in a positive way. Current residents believe that Niagara is welcoming and attractive and understandably, do not want to lose what they consider to be the 'essence' of the region in its natural diversity and environmental assets. New migrants share some of the same sentiments, while desiring a greater diversity in local culture, and the need to be valued and integrated in the community.

Successful immigrant attraction and retention requires multiple coordinated actions and an investment of resources over a period of years. The choice to grow in population and to welcome diversity is a choice for the future, and the very prosperity of the region hangs upon it.

# 1. Introduction

Canada is a country of immigration and, with the important exception of First Nations peoples, this country owes its present identity to the diverse groups of immigrants who settled here, started families, and created businesses to support themselves over the centuries. This is true in Niagara which was historically settled by immigrants from European countries, especially the English, Scottish, Irish, German, French, Dutch, and Italians.

As Canada moves through this century, immigration continues to be a central component of success. The countries of origin now span the globe, but the story is essentially the same: people—including immigrants—will continue to be a valuable resource to local economic development. It is people that will drive economic growth, sustain jobs and support the services that contribute to quality of life. Growth of the knowledge economy depends heavily on skills, knowledge, experience and ability to innovate. Even longstanding industries such as farming, forestry, and construction are becoming more knowledge intensive as we witness the onset of different technologies, materials and competitive forces (OMAFRA, 2011).

Niagara Region currently has five strategic priorities to foster an environment for economic prosperity, one of which is “positioning Niagara globally”. With an end goal of growing its population and improving global attractiveness, a Global Attractiveness Committee was created with the aim to:

- 1) Review relevant information and conduct research to study how welcoming Niagara is to immigrants, and**
- 2) Develop a strategy with short, medium, and long term recommendations on how to increase Niagara’s attractiveness to immigrants.**

Positioning Niagara globally will not happen in isolation but rather in concert with other factors that create opportunities in, collaboration across, and awareness of Niagara as a desirable region for living and doing business. This priority is integrally related to improving opportunities within the four other Niagara Region strategic priorities of goods and people movement, innovation and entrepreneurship, building a job-ready workforce, and doing business differently. Each of these is part of an ecosystem that will attract and retain newcomers to Niagara, requiring a common vision and networks of support across the region.

This report tackles a key piece of this vision, summarizing the work of the Global Attractiveness Committee through focusing on the themes of attracting and retaining immigrants.<sup>2</sup> Immigration is a key component of population growth and economic

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<sup>2</sup> In this report, “immigrants” are persons who are born in another country but make their home in Canada. The term “migrants” refers to anyone who moves into a region or community from

development in Canada and will continue in importance in the foreseeable future as Canada's population will decline based on birth rate alone (Downie, 2010). In the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2016, part of the Places to Grow Act, 2005, Niagara is expected to grow to a population of 610,000 by 2041, an average of 7.2 per cent growth rate per five year census cycle (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2016). In Niagara, population growth is lower than the Ontario and Canadian average, from 2011 to 2016, the population grew from 431,346 to 447,888 (3.8%), compared to the provincial average of 4.6 percent and the national average of 5.0 per cent (Statistics Canada, 2017). Niagara struggles with low population growth, low birth rate, and an aging population, where population in the 0-15 and 30-44 age cohorts is decreasing (Phillips & Durrant, 2017). Conversely, the 20-29 age cohort has increased, perhaps due to the success of local post-secondary education institutes (Statistics Canada, 2013a). Additionally, the region continues to draw people over the age of 45 (Clayton & McCormack, 2016). All of these aspects combine to put increased stress on the tax system with reduced revenue and growing need for services, a dilemma faced across the country that can be addressed in part through increased levels of immigration (Phillips & Durant, 2017).

Immigrants shape and impact communities by adding skills to the existing local labour force, increasing diversity, and boosting the size and productivity of the local economy. Numerous studies have described the various reasons that Canada needs immigrants, and this holds true for Niagara as well (Downie, 2010). Economic development professionals are recognizing that jobs are not the only attractor to a location; in fact jobs can and do follow people (Hicks & Faulk, 2016; Tervo, 2016).

In a recent brief by the Niagara Community Observatory, *Moving Niagara towards a Knowledge Economy*, the authors argue that Niagara has been hard hit by the decline of manufacturing and should work on growing a regional knowledge economy. This will entail "placing a premium on the creation of new knowledge and innovation as drivers of economic revitalization" (Dueck & Conteh 2015, p. 2). For more details on the literature supporting the benefits of immigration, characteristics of a welcoming community and tools for immigrant attraction and retention, please see Appendix A.

*My wife and I call this a promised land. It's not yet, but we are seeing a lot of positive things for the future. Five, ten years Niagara region will be a positive place and a lot of people will be coming here from around the world to live, have a job, have a business, raise kids and start a business.*  
– Immigrant to St Catharines<sup>3</sup>

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elsewhere, be they Canadian-born or immigrant. "Secondary migration" refers to immigrants who initially land in one city but then move elsewhere within Canada. This report focuses on immigrants specifically, including secondary migrants.

<sup>3</sup> Quotations in this report are taken verbatim from the focus groups and employee survey. See Chapter 3 for more details.

Immigrants choose to live in places where they see opportunities, and many are willing to move within Canada in pursuit of financial security and safety (Ostrovsky, Hou & Picot 2011). They are also strongly influenced to move to communities where they already have ethnic and family networks. Other “magnets” include the economic vitality of a community, its general reputation and name recognition, the presence of universities and other educational institutions, and proximity to larger urban areas.

## **The importance of a welcoming community**

The presence of a welcoming community is essential for attracting and retaining immigrants. Being welcoming is especially important in smaller population centres which are often less accustomed to new residents. However, “welcoming” is a vague term that suffers from overuse and under definition. **In this report a welcoming community refers to “a collective effort to create a place where individuals feel valued and included”** (Esses et al., 2010:9). Welcoming and friendly are related but different characteristics give rise to the potential for confusion. Research participants agreed that they thought the people in Niagara were friendly and nice, but they struggled to develop true friendships and integrate in the wider community.

Welcoming includes being friendly, but has a wider scope. A welcoming community “attracts and retains newcomers by: 1) identifying and removing barriers; 2) promoting a sense of belonging; 3) meeting diverse individual needs; and 4) offering services that promote successful integration” (Esses et al., 2010:9).

A very detailed review of “welcoming community” was appropriately undertaken by the Welcoming Communities Initiative (since renamed Pathways to Prosperity) located at the University of Western Ontario. This research identified and operationalized Welcoming Community, ranking the characteristics by order of importance (Esses et al., 2010). The characteristics are, in order:

1. Employment Opportunities
2. Fostering of Social Capital
3. Affordable and Suitable Housing
4. Positive Attitudes toward Immigrants, Cultural Diversity, and the Presence of Newcomers in the Community
5. Presence of Newcomer-Serving Agencies that Can Successfully Meet the Needs of Newcomers
6. Links between Main Actors Working toward Welcoming Communities
7. Municipal Features and Services Sensitive to the Presence and Needs of Newcomers
8. Educational Opportunities
9. Accessible and Suitable Health Care
10. Available and Accessible Public Transit
11. Presence of Diverse Religious Organizations
12. Social Engagement Opportunities
13. Political Participation Opportunities

14. Positive Relationships with the Police and the Justice System
15. Safety
16. Opportunities for Use of Public Space and Recreation Facilities
17. Favourable Media Coverage and Representation

Esses et al. (2010) found the first three characteristics on this list to be important across the literature studied. The next seven characteristics received some consensus in the literature, while the final seven were mentioned sporadically. Measuring the progress and success of a welcoming community requires examining multiple process and outcome indicators within and across characteristics, as they are interdependent.

## Global Attractiveness as a Regional Priority Project

In recognition of the economic realities in Niagara Region, Regional Council initiated 24 priority projects in 2015, with a commitment to improve economic prosperity across the region. One of the key opportunities identified was to leverage Niagara’s global brand and diversify employment, business and investment opportunities. The strategy to improve Niagara’s Global Attractiveness is one of four projects under the goal of “positioning Niagara globally” (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Niagara Regional Council Strategic Priorities 2015-2018**



Global Attractiveness is considered as foundational to positioning Niagara globally. A Global Attractiveness Committee was formed with the aim to study how welcoming Niagara is to immigrants, and create a strategy to improve Niagara’s global attractiveness in order to grow the population with a young, dynamic, skilled population ready to seize and create employment opportunities.

A concerted effort of collaboration and consultation took place among all project leads to ensure integration of key themes of evidence, data and coordinated communication with local partners through all projects. During this process it became clear that work on this strategy was particularly linked to several other priority projects: Youth Attraction and Retention, Net new population of 10,000, PMA Market Research and Housing Strategy Project, Expedited process for development, and Joint economic development action plan.

In addition to these priority projects, there are four other related and ongoing Niagara Region projects:

- 1) Niagara 2041 is a series of plans to ensure the region is prepared for population and employment growth over the next 25 years.
- 2) The Transportation Masterplan is a comprehensive strategy defining policies, programs and infrastructure improvements to address current and expanded transportation needs of the region until 2041.
- 3) GO Train expansion from the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) into Niagara, with service expected to reach Grimsby by 2021 and Niagara Falls by 2023.
- 4) The Council Strategic Priority to attract a foreign financial institution compliments Global Attractiveness as leaders seek to learn from global financial sectors to find out what it would take to be a welcoming community and attract an international financial institution.

The ability of Niagara Region to recognize lessons from the past, utilize best practice from recent collaborative efforts and look to local partners for leadership, support and guidance will assist in creating a welcoming community. These changes are very feasible, and require Doing Business Differently (already a Council Priority), in terms of engagement of partners, key stakeholders, and the public; and collecting and utilizing appropriate data in a collaborative, centralized, and cooperative manner.

[Niagara's] really good strategic location is not exploited to its advantage. Niagara can be looked upon as a conservative Municipality which lacks in being innovative or forward looking eg. lacks entrepreneurship/ business hub, innovative policies etc. Fragmented (every municipality have different agendas and do not come across as working together for one cause). – Survey Respondent

Niagara Community Observatory (NCO) Director Charles Conteh recently stated in the *St. Catharines Standard* (Conteh 2016) that movements around community change need to be “institutionalized” to be sustainable. As such, the Region will need to adapt to new ways of doing business differently, including engaging the public, using electronic and other media; opportunities that will be discussed further in the action plan.

In Summary, this report examines demographic trends in Niagara, presents primary local research grounded in the relevant scholarly and policy literature, and concludes

with a realistic action plan for moving forward on this vision. This report will not focus on employment, the labour market, or housing, as this is the focus of other priority project groups. If resourced properly, actions identified in this report can help the Region achieve its ambitious goal of positioning Niagara globally. Attracting and retaining immigrants to Niagara will require a robust combination of the above magnets and glue.

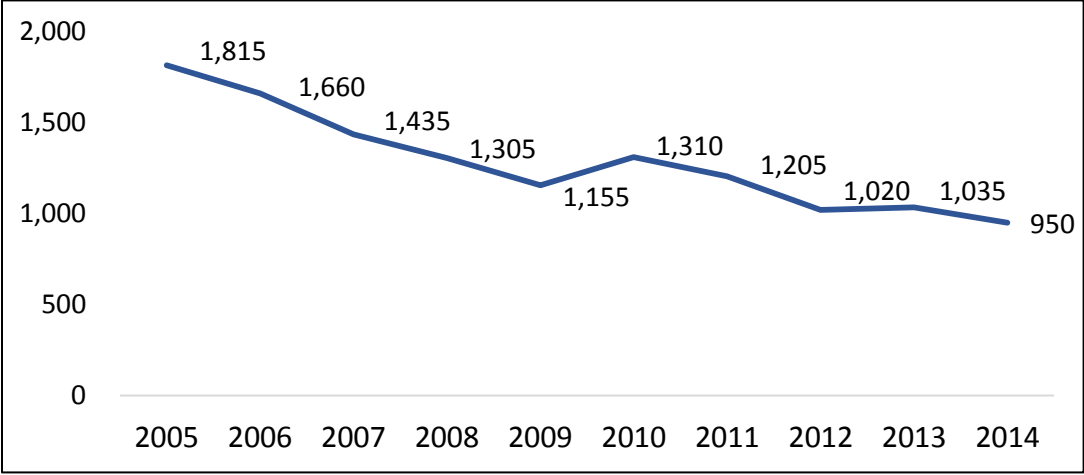
## 2. Current Immigration to Niagara

Recent trends indicate that Niagara has work to do to attract and retain immigrants. Niagara has long been a region of immigration, but recent immigration has been trending downwards by both absolute and proportional measures. The total number of permanent residents who stated their intentions to reside in the region has significantly fallen over the last decade, declining by almost half. As shown in Figure 2, compared to 1,815 permanent residents in 2005, by 2014, only 950 incoming permanent residents stated their intentions to live in Niagara.

Ontario continues to receive more immigrants than any other province, but immigration levels to the province have been declining. Immigration to Ontario fell from 140,525 in 2005 to 95,814 in 2014 while immigration to other provinces held steady or increased (Citizenship & Immigration Canada [CIC], 2015b). More newcomers are choosing to settle in western provinces where there are seen to be more economic opportunities as well as employment-driven immigration programs such as provincial nominee programs.

Yet Niagara is falling behind even within the context of declining immigration to Ontario. Immigrants to Niagara comprised 1.3% of immigration to Ontario in 2005, but by 2014 Niagara’s share had fallen to 1.0% (Citizenship & Immigration Canada [CIC], 2015b). This represents a proportional decline of 23%. In other words, immigration has fallen not only in absolute terms but also in proportion to the province as a whole.

**Figure 2: Total Admissions of Permanent Residents, 2005-2014  
Niagara, Ontario (Intended Census Division of Destination)**



Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015a

These landing figures capture *intended* rather than actual destinations of immigrant “flows”. Another way of examining immigrant populations is to look at “stock” or who is actually residing in an area. The best data on stock that was accessible for this



research is the National Household Survey (NHS)<sup>4</sup> which showed that in 2011 there were 69,715 immigrants living in Niagara regional municipality (Statistics Canada, 2013a). This comprised approximately one in six or 16.5% of residents. This is lower than the proportion of foreign-born in Ontario (28.5%) and for Canada as a whole (20.6%) (Statistics Canada, 2013b). See Appendix B for a more detailed discussion on different data sources of immigration in Niagara, including those suggested for purchase in the next phase of this work.

A consequence of declining immigration is that Niagara's own immigration population is not being replenished by younger working age immigrants. Only 8.6% of immigrants living in Niagara are considered "recent immigrants," defined as being in Canada for ten years or less. In other words, not even one in ten of Niagara's immigrants arrived in recent years. Moreover, close to half of Niagara's immigrant population (45.9%) arrived in Canada before 1971 or at least 45 years ago. Combined with Niagara's growing attraction as a retirement destination and increasing proportions of seniors throughout Canada, it is clear that Niagara is undergoing a significant demographic shift that includes an aging population.

Immigration trends of course do not occur in a vacuum. In the case of Niagara, they conform to larger population growth trends. Population growth in Niagara is lower than the country as a whole. From 2001 to 2006, the population grew by 4.1% (Statistics Canada, 2007), from 2006 to 2011, the population only grew by 0.9% (Statistics Canada, 2013a), while the recently released 2016 census data reveal that Niagara grew 3.8% from 2011 to 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2017). This compares to national growth rates of 5.4%, 5.9% and 5.0% from 2001 to 2006, 2006 to 2011, and 2011 to 2016 respectively (Statistics Canada, 2007, 2013a, 2017). Despite being the 11<sup>th</sup> largest Census Division (CD) in Ontario, Niagara was 23<sup>rd</sup> out of 49 CDs to add to their population between 2001 and 2016 (see Appendix C). Compared to CD growth across Canada from 2011 to 2016, Niagara has the 17<sup>th</sup> largest population, however was 92<sup>nd</sup> in terms of percentage of growth out of 293 CDs (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Finally, there is some evidence that Niagara faces challenges in terms of immigrant retention. Whereas approximately 7465 immigrants identified Niagara as their intended destination, only 5650 recent immigrants were actually living in Niagara from 2006 to May 2011 (Citizenship & Immigration Canada [CIC], 2015b; Statistics Canada, 2013a). Thus, 24% of immigrants are either never reaching Niagara or not remaining in the region. Given that Niagara is not receiving immigrants in proportion to other similar regions in the province, this finding is especially concerning.

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<sup>4</sup> Some of this research continues to be limited by a lack of easily accessible, recent, quality data on immigration to Niagara. The release of 2016 Immigration Census data in November 2017 should offer more up to date insight into newcomer populations, including secondary migration. Further data sources for purchase are listed in Appendix B and should be utilized by Niagara Region in the future.

## A Profile of Recent Immigrants

Despite challenges, Niagara has great diversity in its immigrants who come from dozens of source countries and arrive under a variety of immigration programs and immigration classes.

For many years the region has drawn a large number of its immigrants from the United States. Over the past decade, the other top countries of origin were Colombia, China, the Philippines and India. As it has for centuries, the former colonies of the British Commonwealth continue to be an important source of immigrants. Approximately 75.9% of the permanent resident listing Niagara as their intended destination between 2004 to 2014 came from 20 source countries. These 20 countries are listed in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Admissions of Permanent Residents by Top 20 Country of Birth, 2004-2014**  
Niagara, Ontario (Intended Census Division of Destination)

Country of Birth	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Colombia	110	380	320	165	115	90	110	75	45	50	35	1,495
United States of America	105	140	175	155	140	105	145	120	105	110	90	1,390
People's Republic of China	95	125	110	105	105	105	85	90	100	105	85	1,110
Philippines	55	75	90	70	100	80	95	115	90	90	140	1,000
India	80	80	110	75	65	90	85	80	85	75	85	910
United Kingdom and Colonies	70	80	65	90	85	100	55	40	35	45	25	690
Pakistan	40	95	40	45	30	15	40	20	30	35	35	425
Democratic Republic of Sudan	90	60	35	25	20	15	20	20	35	15	25	360
Republic of Korea	40	35	25	25	40	30	30	20	15	15	10	285
Jamaica	15	15	10	30	30	30	30	20	30	15	25	250
Zimbabwe	35	15	10	40	40	30	15	20	20	20	5	250
Mexico	20	25	30	15	30	20	30	15	20	15	25	245
Haiti	0	0	--	--	--	20	65	70	35	30	20	240
Democratic Republic of Somalia	20	25	25	20	5	25	25	10	15	40	20	230
Turkey	35	45	30	10	10	15	20	5	5	20	--	195
Egypt	25	25	10	10	15	5	25	15	25	10	10	175
Cuba	15	15	15	25	10	15	10	15	20	5	15	160
Nigeria	10	10	20	25	15	30	10	5	10	20	5	160
Iraq	10	20	10	5	5	10	20	20	15	15	--	130
Federal Republic of Germany	15	10	5	10	15	15	15	15	5	10	5	120

Source: Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2015a

Consistent with the literature stating that many immigrants who choose to live in smaller population centres do so to join family and friends already in the area, data from the 2011 NHS suggests that many of these intended new arrivals are joining existing established ethnic communities in Niagara. Among others, these include established Chinese, Filipino, East Indian, Jamaican and Colombian groups that currently reside in the region (Statistics Canada 2013a).

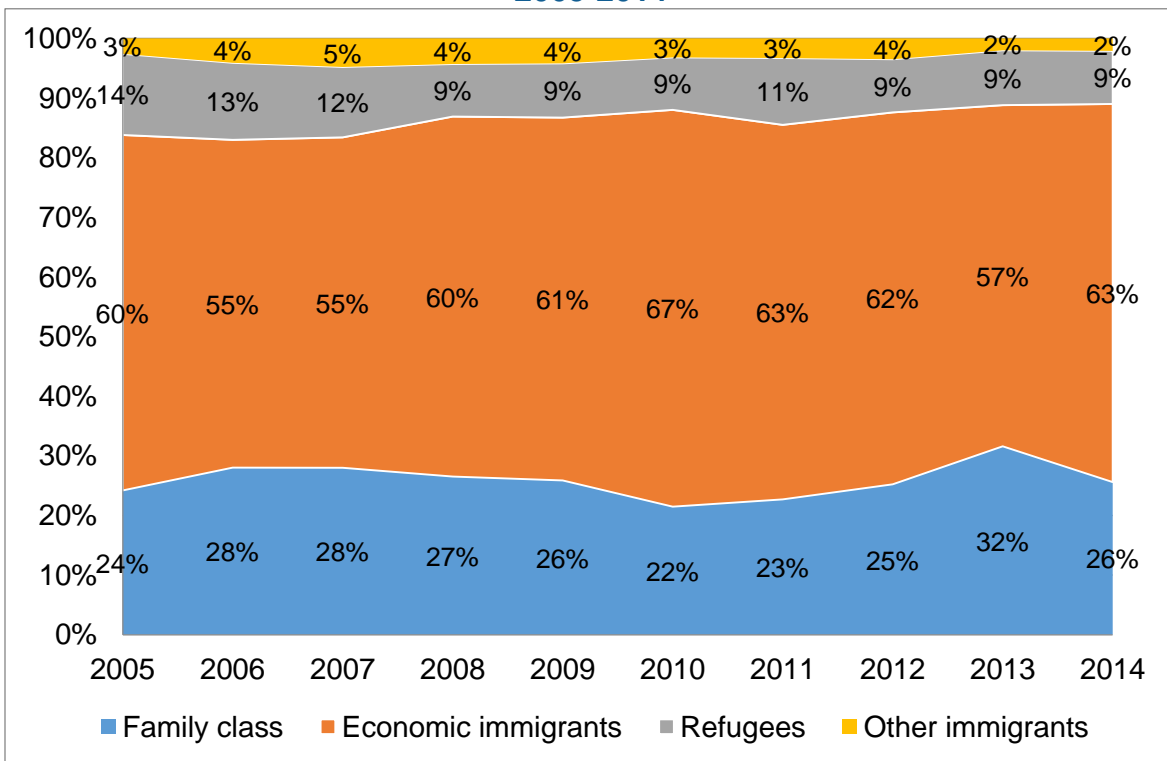
### Immigrant Class – Permanent Residents

Most immigrants are admitted to Canada in one of three classes: economic, family, or refugees/humanitarian. Economic class immigrants are selected for their ability to make an economic contribution to Canada, either through skilled employment, business

creation, or working as a live-in caregiver. Figures for economic class immigrants include not only the principal applicant but also any spouses and dependents who migrate with the applicant. Family class immigrants are sponsored to come to Canada by a family member who pledges to support them financially for a certain period. Refugees are accepted to Canada as permanent residents if they have been recognized as needing protection at a Canadian visa office abroad or (more commonly) from within Canada upon a successful hearing in front of the Immigration and Refugee Board.

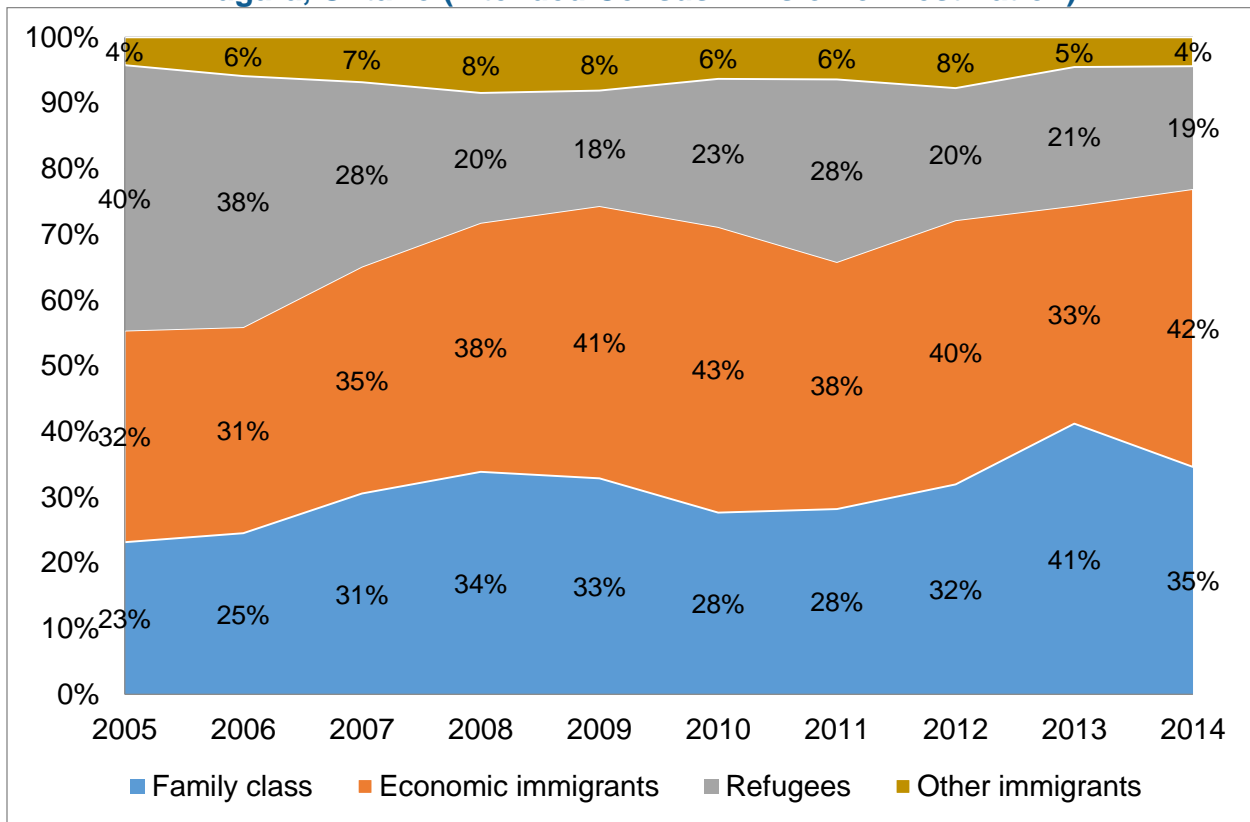
Niagara receives all three main classes of immigrants, but relatively fewer economic class immigrants in proportion to the country as a whole (compare Figures 4 and 5). The region receives proportionately more family class immigrants and refugees, according to their intended destination.

**Figure 4: Canada – Permanent residents by category (percentage distribution), 2005-2014**



Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015b

**Figure 5: Permanent Residents by Category (percentage distribution), 2005-2014  
Niagara, Ontario (Intended Census Division of Destination)**



Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015a

Approximately one-third of all incoming immigrants intending to arrive in Niagara came as family class immigrants. Since 2005, approximately 3,730 family class immigrants intended to arrive in Niagara. Family class immigrants have resettled in every census subdivision in Niagara region.

## Temporary Residents

Temporary residents play a critical role in Canada's economic growth. In order for these foreign nationals to enter into Canada, they must satisfy the necessary requirements under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) before obtaining a valid work or study permit from abroad, which includes agreeing to leave Canada voluntarily at the end of their authorized stay (CIC 2014a).

### Work Permit Holders

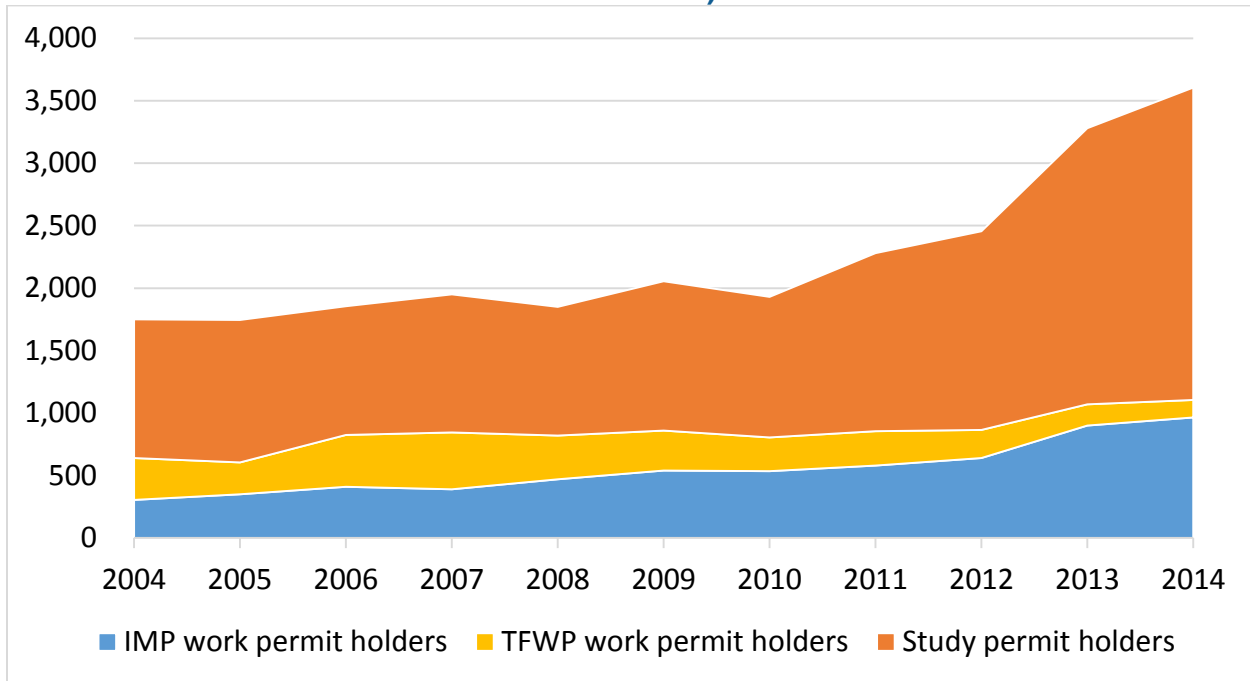
Canada continues to attract and admit temporary residents to the country. The number of foreign nationals with valid work permits tripled from 2000 to 2011. Temporary workers are sought after to participate in the Canadian labour market and help fill labour gaps.

Most temporary foreign residents enter Canada through the International Mobility Program (IMP), a program to provide competitive advantages to Canada and reciprocal benefits to Canadians (CIC 2014a). These work permit holders do not have to obtain a Labour Market Impact Assessment or LMIA. IMP figures include international students who have graduated from a Canadian school; persons working in Canada temporarily due to free trade agreements, such as NAFTA; some permanent resident (PR) applicants settling in Canada while their PR application is finalized; and spouses of highly-skilled foreign workers.

Foreign nationals may also enter Canada through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP), which requires applicants to obtain a LMIA prior to receiving a work permit. An LMIA assesses the need for a foreign worker to fill a specific job, including the absence of a Canadian worker to do the work. The TFWP helps fill genuine labour needs as a last and limited resort when qualified Canadians or permanent residents are not available (CIC 2014a). International students and refugee claimants may also apply for and receive a work permit while in Canada.

Niagara has also seen an increase in the number of temporary residents in the region over the last decade, as shown in Figure 6. Since 2004, the number of temporary residents has more than doubled, despite a decline in the number of arrivals through the TFWP. In 2004, the total TFWP permit holders was 335 but in 2014, there were only 140. Permit holders within the program consist of live-in caregivers, agricultural workers, and other TFWP permit holders. On the other hand, the number of temporary residents arriving through the IMP has more than tripled since 2004 from 305 to 965 in 2014.

**Figure 6: Temporary Permit Holders by Program and Year in which Permit(s) became Effective, 2004-2014, Niagara, Ontario (Intended Census Division of Destination)<sup>5</sup>**



Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015a

### Study Permit Holders

In 2013, Canada accepted 111,865 international students (CIC 2014b). International students contribute to the social fabric of communities across Canada and bring with them new ideas and cultures that enrich the educational institutions. In recognizing these benefits, the federal government has made Canada a destination of choice for talented foreign students. By investing in Canadian educational training and credentials, international students are well prepared for the Canadian labour market and can integrate into Canadian society quickly (CIC 2014b).

*It's better than my imagination. ... As my first stop in Canada, it's a good choice. – International Student*

<sup>5</sup> Temporary permit holders refer to permit holders with a valid permit that was also signed in the given year. The table on Temporary Residents (TR) has been revised to reflect the June 20, 2014 overhaul of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP). The reporting methodology has also been revised to count TRs, which includes Foreign Workers and International Students, based on the type of permit held by a TR (effective from the date that the permit was signed, or a valid permit at the end of a given year). As a result of the changes above, the reports for each permit holder type has been separated in order to enhance clarity. Intended Census Division of Destination defined by the intended destination as specified on the permit and, when the intended destination is not specified for permits signed on or after January 1st, 2012, the last known address of the permit holder as of December 31<sup>st</sup> of the given year is used instead.

Likewise, Niagara continues to invest in attracting international students to the region. In 2014, Niagara welcomed 2,500 international students from around the world who intended to live and study in Niagara (see Figure 6). International students represented 69.3% of all temporary residents that year.<sup>6</sup> The top 3 source countries for international students to the region are China, India, and Korea (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7: International Student permit holders by top ten source country of birth in which study permit(s) became effective, 2004-March 2015  
Niagara, Ontario (Intended Census Division of Destination)<sup>5</sup>**

Country of Birth	Total
People’s Republic of China	5,200
India	2300
Korea	1090
Saudi Arabia	655
Mexico	605
United States	445
Nigeria	360
Hong Kong	345
Russia	255
Japan	155

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015a

International students are not captured in Canadian immigration data as they are only temporary residents in Canada, not permanent residents. However, this sub-group is critical to the growth and prosperity of Canada’s future. Many international students view their studies as the first step on an immigration journey to Canada. Indeed, just over half of international students plan to apply for permanent residence in Canada (CBIE 2016). International students have been referred to as “ideal immigrants” in the sense that they are young, educated, have Canadian credentials, and are proficient in English or French (CIC, 2014b).

Many international students stay in Canada after graduation, but it appears anecdotally that few remain in Niagara. This likely relates to broader challenges faced by the region in terms of retaining the “under 35” demographic as well as the relative ease of gaining permanent residency via provincial nominee programs in western provinces. These challenges notwithstanding, this population represents tremendous potential for Niagara as they have already chosen Niagara once.

<sup>6</sup> Most students file taxes annually and are included in the Taxfiler database, which is why that data set cannot be used to measure the number of permanent residents in a community. See Appendix B for more details on data sources.

*China is very busy and here it is different. That's why we come here, because it's quiet. It's peaceful. It's a different life. I like this life. –International Student*

*It's a good place to study. It's a good place to live. But not a good place to work. –International Student*

The next chapter details the findings from survey and focus group research conducted in 2016, including the challenges, attractions and factors influencing residents to leave or remain in Niagara.



### **3. Attraction and Retention Factors in Niagara**

Building on current immigration trends, what are the challenges faced by immigrants? Which factors about Niagara in particular play into the attraction and retention equations? Which factors keep residents and what might compel them to leave? This primary research built on the literature study found in Appendix A. To get first-hand, local views on these questions, nine focus groups were held in July and October 2016 to gather input from various populations within Niagara, including immigrants, international students, business owners, and service providers who work with immigrants.

The immigrants who participated in the focus groups included Niagara Region employees, participants employed elsewhere, those actively looking for work, or individuals that had newly arrived in Canada and were in the process of upgrading their language skills. Focus groups were held in St. Catharines, Thorold, Welland, and Fort Erie. In addition, information was gathered from several key informants unable to attend focus group sessions via individual interviews. Please see Appendix D for a more detailed profile of research participants.

Attraction and retention was also explored in a July 2016 survey of Niagara Region employees, one of the largest employers in Niagara providing access to a group with a fair number of recent immigrants. Among the 157 respondents, there was a mix of lifetime residents of Niagara, immigrants to Canada, and migrants to Niagara from other parts of Canada. Twenty-nine respondents were recent immigrants, having lived in Canada fewer than 10 years. Input from the survey is integrated in the three sections below.

In addition to the focus groups and staff survey used to inform this report, the Niagara Region worked with the private sector on a Homeowners and Builders survey conducted by PMA Brethour Group. Surveys were mailed to all the new homes that were built in the last five years in Niagara (2357 homes), and 354 surveys were completed (16% response rate). The research revealed that 23% of these homeowners were not born in Canada, 46% are 55 years of age or older, and 32% are retired. This data reveals that a higher percentage of immigrants are already purchasing new homes compared to the percentage of immigrants in Niagara's current population and therefore the views of these recent migrants is useful to inform our current understanding of the challenges and attractions to living in Niagara.

#### **Challenges of Living in Niagara**

Focus group participants cited a number of challenges related to living in Niagara. The most commonly cited challenges were the limited advanced educational and career opportunities. These were viewed as hindering both attraction and retention. In terms of employment, the lack of industry and absence of many large employers were

identified as challenges, as were perceptions that nepotism is a common practice in hiring. One participant remarked, “It’s not what you know, but who you know.”

*My husband started his own business. It was extremely difficult within the first two years to get the business up and running, mainly due to the fact that everyone in Niagara knows each other and it was difficult as a newcomer to break into the scene and offer different products and services – Survey respondent*

Some immigrant participants cited “skills mismatch” between the work they were capable of performing and the job skills they actually used. The participants who worked in a long term care facility noted that many jobs for nurses were going unfilled at the same time that many internationally trained nurses struggled to have their qualifications recognized.

From a business perspective, taxes are viewed as being high and there are not many business or investment opportunities. Niagara is viewed as more of a retirement area than a thriving business community.

*In the employment industry, we hear all the time that there are no jobs, there are no jobs. There's no jobs for our youth, there's no job for anybody in Niagara. —Service provider*

Many participants noted the lack of visible minorities in the region, stating that they felt conspicuous and that locals were relatively uneducated about how to pronounce their names or acknowledge their culture. For example, according to one Muslim participant in a focus group, not a single co-worker acknowledged the conclusion of Ramadan, the biggest holiday of the year for Muslims.

**Local Niagarans are viewed not so much as prejudiced but as unaccustomed to religious and ethnic diversity on the scale that exists in the GTA, which is one of the most diverse regions of the world.**

Many newcomers stated that they had experienced discrimination in Niagara. It was felt that there needs to be greater cultural awareness as well as cultural sensitivity training for professionals. A lack of ethnic stores, groceries and restaurants was also identified as a challenge. At the same time it was acknowledged that most businesses must cater to customers beyond one specific group. Local immigrant and ethnic populations are simply not big enough to support and sustain many businesses.

Public transit was identified as a major challenge among many participants. The majority of PMA survey respondents (84%) rated public transit as average to poor (30% rated it 1/5, poor). Busses do not run frequently enough, particularly for persons doing shift work, international students, and newcomers who do not have access to personal

automobiles. Indeed, transit is an ongoing challenge in Niagara whose population centres are dispersed and rural as well as urban. Transit is important to serving the community and becoming more integrated. Newcomers are particularly vulnerable in that they often cannot afford to purchase a car, and if applicable, where the process for obtaining a driver's license can take two years from the first test. Finding affordable housing was also identified as a challenge to some, particularly as housing prices are increasing rapidly. However, Niagara is considered more affordable compared to prices in other GTA communities.

The cost of child care was also cited as a challenge and disincentive to work. It received an average to poor rating by 86% of PMA survey respondents. Single parents in particular were challenged in terms of income, transit, and finding community connections. Newcomers on social assistance, especially single parents, identified challenges in terms of using transit, being able to meet monthly expenses, and finding parenting and child minding help. Young children cannot be left alone, yet a number of participants identified not trusting anyone to watch their children, leaving a huge burden on the primary caregiver forced to navigate around Niagara on public transit, particularly difficult in winter. Ontario Works was viewed as helpful but insufficient, with rent, groceries and transportation often exceeding the monthly allowance received. Participants on social assistance lack any cushion to rely on in case of emergency, yet several reported having spent significant funds on cab fare to take their child to hospital after hours when busses were not running or time was of essence.

**Many of the challenges that are faced by newcomers are also faced by the Canadian-born population.**

Poverty, discrimination, unemployment, lack of job training, and inadequate transit are systemic issues that need to be addressed. Framing these challenges as newcomer specific challenges can lead to the expectation that the inability to overcome is due to personal deficiencies. For immigrants, these issues are often compounded by being new to a community as well as having a language barrier. It should be noted however, that immigrants are less likely to use social assistance (IBP, Inc., 2014).

Another group of challenges centres on getting information to newcomers. The region lacks a single point of access to current information. Service providers noted the challenge of promoting and accessing services across the diverse regional web of municipalities and population centres. The immigration portal (<http://niagaraimmigration.ca>) was viewed as static, out of date, and inaccessible to many immigrants as it is available only in English.

All participants stated that Niagara is a friendly community and that people are very nice; yet, they lack real connections with Canadians. They often come into contact with Canadians when accessing services but rarely develop friendships with people in their cities and towns. This can lead to barriers such as delayed integration while perpetuating the feeling of being an outsider.

*The Canadians they introduce you to [are] organizations and not actually families. It is only the organizations that are helping us--like the Salvation Army, the school and the churches--they are all organizations. But we know that is a barrier and a limitation. Our kids in 7 or 8, 10 years they go to school and they will get friends so they will probably feel different but we are even afraid to practice our English we can learn today here but when we go home and start talking in Portuguese. We will talk in our own language because I don't have Canadian friends. –Newcomer to Fort Erie*

*We are newcomers. Every day we meet local people. The only thing we interact with them is greeting you know. We don't have a lot of contact with real Canadians. It's just "how are you?" And that is it.... We cannot communicate with them and make friendship with them....when we come to Canada, we don't feel that we are home. We want to feel that we are home, that Canada is really our home, our new home...**we still feel like we are visitors.** –Newcomer to Fort Erie*

Many newcomers talked about not having a social network and not having people to rely on in times of need. It takes less effort and commitment to refer someone to an organization, but it takes greater investment and openness to become someone's friend.

Finally, some immigrants spoke to the stress of family separation caused by immigration policy. They cited difficulties sponsoring family members to immigrate to Canada, even though family members could be supporting each other, for example by assisting with child care.

## **Attractors to Niagara and What People Like about Living in Niagara**

Several key themes arose in discussion of this topic, namely natural beauty, affordability, and quality/pace of life.

Niagara is viewed as peaceful and quiet with clean air and little congestion. One participant noted that he had always been stressed by the traffic around Toronto but after moving to Niagara has realized that he enjoys driving. Another said that he had lived in big, crowded cities for much of his life and found life in Niagara to be calm and refreshing. Participants commented on the nice pace of life in which people take time to know their neighbours and establish a strong sense of community. It is viewed as safe, with good schools.

*Niagara is "like a pearl in the ocean." It's so green here; it's healthy with trails and parks. Now I run, jog, walk on trails. In Toronto I could not do that. In one minute from home I can be on a ravine for a run. –Immigrant to St. Catharines*

*Where I used to live, I never saw my neighbours and I lived there for years. When we first came here on the first day, the moving day, I met all of the neighbours and they came to my house and they brought us some treats. –Immigrant to Fort Erie*

The survey findings from the PMA research of new home buyers suggest the following three key factors that led to relocation to Niagara: 1) affordable house prices (primary attractor for 58% of survey respondents); 2) access to natural areas and available amenities (including hiking, trails and biking) (72% rated above average to excellent); and, 3) closer proximity to family and friends (62% above average to excellent). Multiple hiking trails and other ways to enjoy the outdoors are available year round, even on a week night after work. Shopping (49% above average to excellent) was also highly rated by participants, especially cross-border shopping with the close proximity to the USA.

Niagara is more affordable than other parts of Southern Ontario, especially compared to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).<sup>7</sup> At the same time, Niagara has good proximity to the GTA and US border. Members of the business community noted that the area is well-positioned for export and for providing soft landing (initial arrival) services to international firms exploring a Canadian/Ontario presence. The presence of a local business incubator (nGen) was also viewed as an attractor.

*So the solution to that is a solution to the jobs. With jobs there are job creations. There is also entrepreneurship. That is the biggest. Entrepreneurship. Try and connect the immigrants, I'm talking about their roots in terms of business that they can do here. Whether that is international business where they can export Canadian products overseas. Create a belt in Niagara as a business community itself. Empower them business-wise...the second one is attracting business to Niagara itself. That we need to do. I don't believe we have done enough marketing – Business owner, Focus group participant*

Immigrants identified several reasons for moving to the region, including the support of family or friends already living in the region. For a number of participants, Niagara was their first landing point in Canada. Although they had no prior connection to the region, they liked it and decided to stay after feeling welcomed, which included feeling supported by individuals, faith-based groups, the community, and other organizations including settlement agencies and the office of Fort Erie's Member of Parliament.

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<sup>7</sup> The difference in housing costs across southern Ontario is stark. According to Canadian Real Estate Association, the residential average home sale price in Toronto in December 2016 was \$730,472, compared to Hamilton-Burlington at \$481, 997 and Niagara at \$319,223. For more information, see <http://www.crea.ca/housing-market-stats/national-average-price-map/> and <http://creastats.crea.ca/stca/>

Several came as secondary migrants from the GTA after a deliberate search for a new hometown.

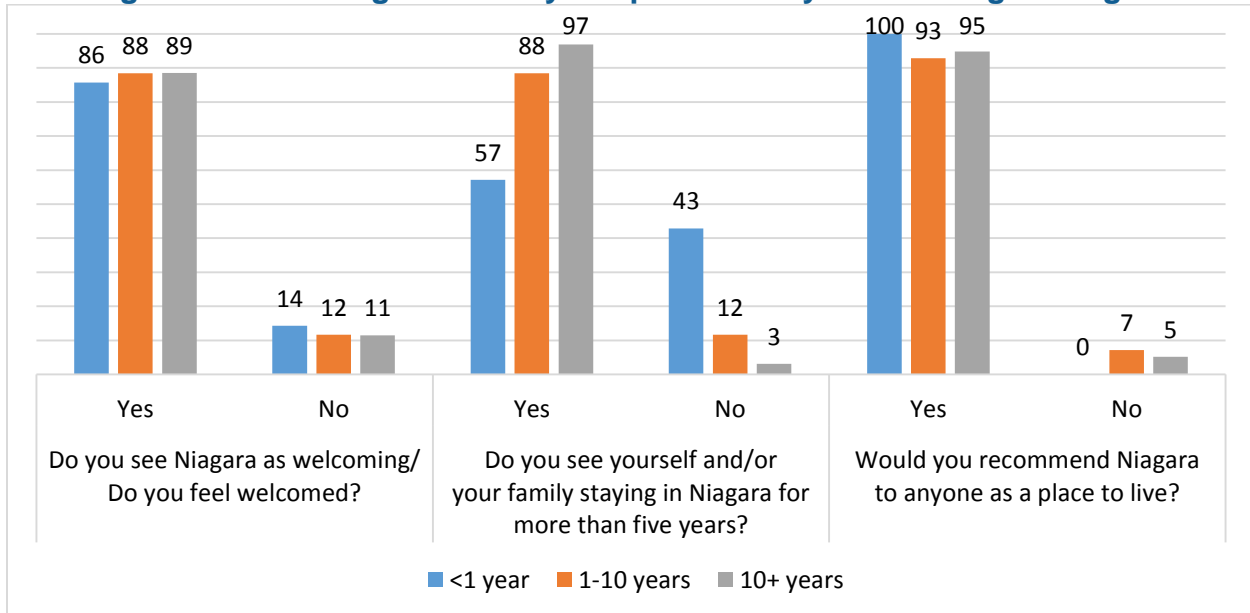
*I came from a metropolitan city in my country. It was really polluted. ... People in this city are very kind and have respect for different cultures. –International Student*

In the survey of Niagara Region employees, who have stable jobs, the opinions of living in Niagara were very positive:

- 88% of respondents stated that they believed Niagara to be welcoming or (among those new to Niagara) that they themselves felt welcomed;
- 93% stated that they intended to stay in Niagara for at least the next 5 years; and,
- 95% would recommend Niagara as a place to live.

These numbers did not differ widely based on the number of years living in Niagara, though not surprisingly there was a strong correlation between time of residence in Niagara and perceived likelihood of staying in Niagara, as shown in Figure 8. It must be noted that the majority of respondents to this survey were not new immigrants and this does not necessarily represent the views of all Niagara residents.

**Figure 8: Percentage of Survey Respondents by Time Living in Niagara**



Source: Niagara Region Staff Survey, June 2016

*If you are lucky to find a job in your field that pays well, this is a wonderful place to work, live, and raise a family. –Survey Respondent*



## Weighing the Costs: Leaving or Staying in Niagara

Employment was a major theme that ran through all focus groups, both as a reason to stay and a reason to move elsewhere. A key theme in this response group was that Niagara is a great place to live provided that a person has a good job.

Participants knew many immigrants who had left Niagara, and the most common reason for leaving was to pursue employment. They knew some people who wanted to live in a bigger, more vibrant city or relocated to be around more people from their own ethno-cultural communities. Other factors that drew people away from the area were the lack of graduate programs at Brock and the lack of high level and occupational-specific ESL and bridging programs.

*I believe that attracting companies that generate jobs would be a great thing to do. Personally I've known of people that have had to leave the region because of lack of employment.  
–Survey Respondent*

There seemed to be a strong perception among immigrants that Niagara is a landing pad for newcomers only because of its shared border with the USA. This view suggests that newcomers are quick to move to bigger cities in search of amenities and opportunities, and that they often lack the incentive to remain in Niagara. Yet most of the newcomers in the focus groups wanted to stay in Niagara even despite their challenges, especially young families, because they recognized that the region is a good place to raise their young children.

*...I just want to stay here. I am tired of moving luggage and running away. I don't know where I am running to. I am fearing to die. I am fearing to keep my kids safe and giving them the best education and opportunity. --  
Refugee Claimant, Fort Erie*

Newcomers—particularly refugee claimants and their families—want to stay, put down roots, and establish themselves here. Despite their desire to stay, it is a decision they seem to constantly weigh against the perceived cost. Most participants expressed their hope of finding a job and not having to rely on social assistance as a means of supporting themselves. Given the lack of opportunities in some areas of Niagara (i.e., lack of jobs, job training, and mobility) remaining to stay in their communities puts them at risk of relying on social assistance long term, which they did not want to do, and historically are less likely to do (IBP, Inc., 2014).

They also seem to continue to weigh the cost of leaving without any assurance that leaving would alleviate their employment barriers. Some suggest that friends and family who have moved to bigger cities continue to struggle and regret leaving behind their close-knit support system.

*Although St Catharines doesn't have a lot of opportunity, the housing [cost] here is low, however in Toronto, it's expensive but there is a lot of opportunities to work so [we] don't know how to balance the equation. – Immigrant to St Catharines*

## **Conclusion**

This primary research supported findings in the more general literature on immigrant attraction and retention. It is important to remember that at this stage of the project we could only research current residents of Niagara. Immigrants move in search of opportunities and seek welcoming communities where they are accepted.

Like most Canadians, immigrants seek employment, safety, educational opportunities, access to recreation and green space, and community acceptance and belonging. For immigrants who are new to Canada, language training and relevant settlement supports are also a high priority. This evidence provides the foundation for the proposed objectives and action plan recommended to Niagara Region in partnership with multiple community stakeholders.

There are many important features in Niagara that can be capitalized upon, however there is important work that needs to be done to be a culturally diverse region that is more entrepreneurial, especially amongst the highly skilled professions. The many immigrants who shared their experiences with the research team expressed their desire to live in a place that is welcoming, devoid of nepotism, recognizes religious and other forms of diversity, and provides easy access to services.



## 4. Next steps for success: The Action Plan

### Next steps for success

Immigrant attraction and retention is not a single goal that can be achieved quickly. Rather, these are two related goals, and each require laying a foundation upon which targeted actions can be built. Attraction requires supporting community readiness to be a welcoming community, and then the creation of a positive image of the region and a clear, unified marketing plan for the region and its amenities. Retention requires newcomers to feel welcomed, supported and able to access various opportunities, especially relevant employment opportunities. To be successful in achieving Global Attractiveness, the foundation of these tasks is stakeholder engagement. Creating a formalized structure will provide the opportunity for stakeholders and community members to inform key decisions and implement the action plan together with Niagara Region.

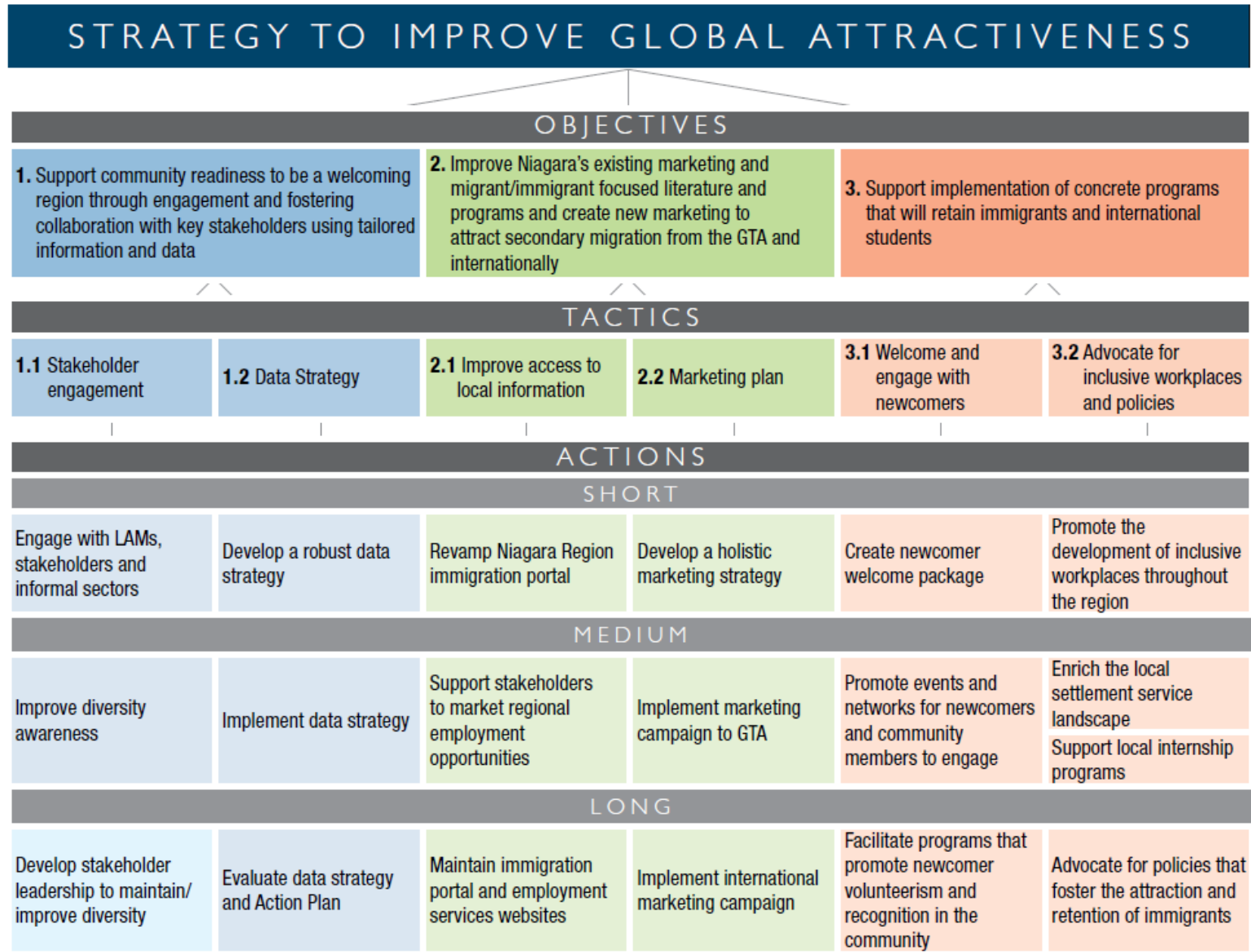
Lessons from recent history demonstrate that Niagara is ready and able to step up to this process and unify around a common goal. GO Train expansion, the General Electric bid, the Healthy Kids Community Challenge and the Niagara Region Smoke-Free Bylaw are all excellent examples of the power of coordinated action across the region, including multiple levels of government, education, business and non-profit sectors to collaborate and achieve mutually beneficial objectives. Earning the active endorsement and participation of all community stakeholders will be a significant success factor for this action plan.

In this section, we suggest short, medium, and long-term actions that can support three key objectives to be undertaken with internal and external partners:

1. To support community readiness to be a welcoming region through engagement and fostering collaboration with key stakeholders using tailored information and data.
2. To improve Niagara's existing marketing and migrant/immigrant focused literature and create new marketing to attract primary and secondary migration from within Canada and internationally.
3. To support further implementation of concrete programs that will retain immigrants and international students.

These objectives were developed based on the evidence of primary and secondary research, which flows in continuity from the key action areas that focus specifically on the GA Strategy (see Figure 9). The recommendations follow the order of themes in the previous chapter, namely challenges faced by new migrants, attractors to Niagara, and retention factors new migrants assess in deciding to leave or stay.

**Figure 9: Global Attraction Action Plan**



These are closely related to other priority projects, including Youth Attraction and Retention activities, with actions proposed here being applicable to both. However, they are not all-inclusive; the plan recognizes that there are other related activities, plans and recommendations, which should be taken into consideration. Furthermore, additional ideas may surface during the process of implementation that should equally be taken into consideration. Some related actions already taken by the Global Attractiveness Committee during this project are listed in Appendix E.

To achieve these objectives, the recommendations should be coordinated by the Economic Development Department, and therefore would require the appointment of an effective, collaborative lead who excels in teamwork, respect for all partners, and effective group problem solving. Team members would need to have these same traits. The team leader would play a key supporting role with the priority project leads to ensure smooth transition into the current project, as well as filling the position as community convener, building on key partner and stakeholder relationships. Having a singular point of contact at Niagara Region for our private sector partners would eliminate duplication and confusion when conducting engagement, while guaranteeing consistent messaging with partners and presenting a single, united message to potential residents, businesses and investors.

The role of the Region in implementing these recommendations varies. For the bulk of the work, the Region will take on the role of supporting collaborative leadership of the stakeholders, through hosting, engaging, connecting, listening and responding to the lead of other community partners and organizations. For some the Region will provide a lead position, for instance with internal policy changes and programs, advocacy programs, or supporting a regional data plan. When the Region is leading, it is always understood that the Region leads to support all of Niagara. The proposed role of the Region is included, but not definitive for each of the recommendations below. In recommendations where the Region is not the lead, the action would be incorporated into the global attractiveness team work plan and a lead would need to be identified among the key partners. There may be additional stakeholders not listed here that should be included to ensure inclusive participation across the region.

These objectives cannot be achieved in a vacuum but rather must be undertaken as a part of broader regional action on three fronts: growing employment opportunities, relevant policy advocacy at the provincial and federal levels, and a robust data strategy to collect and monitor regional demographic information. The focus of this report is not on job creation or attraction, as that is the focus of other priority projects at Niagara Region and in the community. However, by creating a more welcoming community and addressing the needs of newcomers, job creation will be enabled.

## **Objective 1: To support community readiness to be a welcoming region through engagement and fostering collaboration with key stakeholders using tailored information and data.**

### **1.1 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

Collaborating with community partners, supporting partnerships and providing guidance and direction is essential to any community project. This is central to the action plan, where a formalized structure of community engagement will inform future plans and implementation, ensuring the success of this project. In terms of supporting a welcoming environment, community engagement is crucial (Kukushkin, 2009). Many Canadians have misguided understandings of immigrants and their common stereotypes need to be challenged. Building horizontal relationships between migrants and receiving communities is a model of community building that has been successful in other communities (Triple S. Community-building, 2005). Outreach to residents in communities where growth is being targeted will provide opportunities for current residents to voice their concerns and understand the broader context of the desired growth.

#### ***SHORT TERM: Engage with Local Area Municipalities (LAMs), key stakeholders and informal sectors***

##### **Key deliverables:**

- 1) Arrange a roadshow visiting each LAM, providing local data and evaluating the current local context
- 2) Support the creation of a formalized community structure for key stakeholders and informal sectors to gather and discuss challenges, best practices and options for moving forward, to inform key decisions and implementation of their action plan.
- 3) Enhance outreach opportunities into targeted communities to allow residents to voice their concerns and discuss the aim of global attractiveness

**Proposed role of the Region:** Lead, with support from other organizations

**Key partners:** LAMs, Local Immigration Partnership (LIP); local Native Centres; settlement organizations; ethnic organizations; places of worship; local businesses; educational institutions; Niagara Community Observatory (NCO); Niagara Workforce Planning Board (NWPB); all Chambers of Commerce.

#### ***INTERMEDIATE: Work with LAMs, key stakeholders and informal sectors to improve diversity awareness within their organizations and the region***

##### **Key deliverables:**

- 1) Leverage the community structure formed in the short term with the work of LIP and other organizations to build community readiness

- 2) Create strategy of events, programs, activities to promote diversity and a welcoming community
- 3) Promote these programs through campaigns including social media
- 4) Consider development of a local speakers' bureau of business owners, employers, and immigrants who speak publicly about these topics, including from personal experience.

**Proposed role of the Region:** Support collaborative leadership of stakeholders

**Key partners:** LAMs, LIP; local Native Centres; Settlement organizations; ethnic organizations; places of worship; local businesses; educational institutions; NCO; NWPB; all Chambers of Commerce.

***LONG TERM: Ongoing development of stakeholder leadership to maintain/improve diverse community***

**Key deliverables:**

- 1) Support a structure for review and revision of stakeholder leadership
- 2) Create an evaluation plan to measure the level of diversity and success of community and stakeholder involvement
- 3) Promote sustainable structures within community and stakeholder organizations

**Proposed role of the Region:** Support collaborative leadership of stakeholders

**Key partners:** LAMs, LIP; local Native Centres; Settlement organizations; ethnic organizations; places of worship; local businesses; educational institutions; NCO; NWPB; all Chambers of Commerce.

## **1.2 DATA STRATEGY**

Effective strategy and action is based on sound information and data that is collected prior to the start of a project and throughout to ensure that the intended outcomes are being achieved. Local citizens and government officials are unaware of the current levels of diversity or all of the challenges faced by newcomers to the region. Accessing and presenting accurate, accessible information is the foundation for people to make informed decisions that can result in thoughtful change.

***SHORT TERM: Develop a robust data strategy***

**Key deliverables:**

- 1) Explore available and timely data sources to develop a robust data strategy
- 2) Track and trend performance in key deliverables

**Proposed role of the Region:** Lead, with support from other organizations

**Key partners:** Brock – Niagara Community Observatory; Niagara Workforce Planning Board.

### ***INTERMEDIATE: Implement data strategy***

#### **Key deliverables:**

- 1) Obtain external data (i.e. Longitudinal Immigrant Database, 2016 Census)
- 2) Track performance through collecting data
- 3) Disseminate data to stakeholders

**Proposed role of the Region:** Lead, with support from other organizations

**Key partners:** Brock; NCO; NWPB.

### ***LONG TERM: Evaluate data strategy and Global Attractiveness strategy overall***

#### **Key deliverables:**

- 1) Assess, revise data strategy
- 2) Assess performance in key deliverables
- 3) Ensure information is embedded and informing policy and strategy

**Proposed role of the Region:** Lead or collaborative lead

**Key partners:** Brock; NCO; NWPB.

**Objective 2: To improve Niagara’s existing marketing and migrant/immigrant focused literature and programs and create new marketing to attract secondary migration from the GTA and internationally.**

## **2.1 IMPROVE ACCESS TO LOCAL INFORMATION**

In order to attract new people to the region, it is essential that they are able to easily access information about the services, amenities, and activities available (CIC, 2001; Riemer, 2007). Newcomers to the region stated that they found the current immigration portal to be static, out of date, and inaccessible. It was challenging for service providers to promote their activities, as well as for people seeking those services to find them.

### ***SHORT TERM: Revamp the Niagara Region immigration portal***

#### **Key deliverables:**

- 1) Revise the immigration portal to include local information on housing, cost of living, transit, services, education opportunities at all levels, amenities, social and cultural activities available in the region
- 2) Ensure the site is available in multiple languages
- 3) Ensure clear links to relevant sources
- 4) Ensure relevant “packages” are available for employers and potential immigrants for clear and easy information.

**Proposed role of the Region:** Lead, with support from other organizations

**Key partners:** LIP, local Native Centres; settlement organizations; ethnic organizations; places of worship; local businesses; educational institutions; NCO; NWPB; all Chambers of Commerce.

***INTERMEDIATE: Support stakeholders to market the employment opportunities in the region***

**Key deliverables:**

- 1) Support centralization of web-based employment services to create ease of access
- 2) Consider online networking opportunities, including support structures for interested newcomers to contact regarding specific employment or business opportunities
- 3) Expand Niagara's Employment Crawl to include international students

**Proposed role of the Region:** Support other organizations

**Key partners:** Employment services organizations, Brock, Niagara College

***LONG TERM: Update immigration portal and employment services websites***

**Key deliverables:**

- 1) Maintain websites to ensure information is up to date and relevant
- 2) Ensure language options are relevant

**Proposed role of the Region:** Support other organizations

**Key partners:** Employment services organizations, Brock, Niagara College

## **2.2 MARKETING PLAN**

The term marketing can hold different meanings across various sectors; in this action plan marketing is referred to as activities associated with buying and selling a product or service, which includes acquiring and maintaining relationships with customers. In this case we are promoting positive services and opportunities to attract potential immigrants, businesses and investors to Niagara. Immigrants are influenced by the lifestyle preferences, amenities, and a range of employment opportunities for all family members (CIC, 2001; DiBiase & Bauder, 2005). They need to know what the region offers in order to inform their settlement decision. In developing the marketing plan, the Region needs to build on existing relationships with private sector partners and engage with the business community.

***SHORT TERM: Develop a holistic marketing strategy which targets both secondary migration from the GTA and primary international migration/immigration***

**Key deliverables:**

- 1) Consult with local partners to develop a plan to be used by all LAMs, educational institutions, and others as makes sense.
- 2) Develop slogan for marketing



- 3) Target specific countries of origin based on data

**Proposed role of the Region:** Lead, with support from other organizations

**Key partners:** LAMs; local businesses; all Chambers of Commerce; LIP; educational institutions.

***INTERMEDIATE: Implement marketing campaign to the Greater Toronto Area***

**Key deliverables:**

- 1) Integrate strategy to include purchased ads, as well as social media
- 2) Create platforms for Niagara's newcomers to tell their stories
- 3) Target visitors to parks on weekends with 'warm connections'

**Proposed role of the Region:** Lead, with support from other organizations

**Key partners:** LAMs; local businesses; all Chambers of Commerce; LIP; educational institutions.

***LONG TERM: Implement international marketing campaign***

**Key deliverables:**

- 1) Develop multi-lingual advertisements
- 2) Utilize multiple media sources to promote the region, including social media and informal personal networks, as well as purchased ads
- 3) Target countries with NAFTA exempt professionals ready to immigrate through social media and attending international trade shows

**Proposed role of the Region:** Lead, with support from other organizations

**Key partners:** LAMs; local businesses; all Chambers of Commerce; LIP; educational institutions.

**Objective 3: To support further implementation of concrete programs that will retain immigrants and international students.**

**3.1 WELCOME AND ENGAGE WITH NEWCOMERS**

A large factor in retaining immigrants is the degree that an individual or family feels welcome and integrated in the community. Niagara has a great opportunity to help immigrants integrate, as they often leave everything to start a new life, an important investment in coming to Canada. Newcomers desire real connections to the people in their neighbourhood, not just their service providers. While finding employment is critical to arriving and staying in a community, immigrants need to feel included as full members of a community in order to remain (Walton-Roberts, 2008). This is a strength of Canada's diversity, and one that can be enhanced in Niagara. It includes promoting opportunities for newcomers to be involved in local government, management boards, school committees, and neighbourhood groups.



***SHORT TERM: Create newcomer welcome package***

**Key deliverables:**

- 1) Include welcome gifts such as free passes to local attractions
- 2) Include information about relevant services
- 3) Offer packages in multiple languages

**Proposed role of the Region:** Support from other organizations

**Key partners:** LAMs, LIP; all Chambers of Commerce; settlement organizations.

***INTERMEDIATE: Promote events and networks for newcomers and community members to engage with each other***

**Key deliverables:**

- 1) Link international students with other regional stakeholder groups
- 2) Explore the creation of a young professionals network with previous international students and immigrants settled in Niagara
- 3) Host other social and cultural events to celebrate diversity and provide opportunities for interaction
- 4) Promote ethnic stores, groceries and restaurants to the whole community

**Proposed role of the Region:** Support other organizations

**Key partners:** LAMs, Settlement organizations; LIP; all Chambers of Commerce; educational institutions.

***LONG TERM: Facilitate programs that promote newcomer volunteerism and recognition in the community***

**Key deliverables:**

- 1) Support organizations to promote opportunities for newcomers to volunteer or work part-time
- 2) Support awards that recognize immigrants' contribution to the community

**Proposed role of the Region:** Support other organizations

**Key partners:** LAMs, LIP; local Native Centres; Settlement organizations; ethnic organizations; places of worship; local businesses; educational institutions; NCO; NWPB; all Chambers of Commerce.

### **3.2 ADVOCATE FOR INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES AND POLICIES**

For change to be sustainable it needs to be institutionalized through changing policies and practices (Conteh 2016). Newcomers may require new or revised types of services and it is important that they are easily able to access adequate and inclusive settlement and employment services (Di Biase & Bauder, 2005). Since many of the challenges faced by newcomers are the same as Canadian-born individuals, improving services such as transit, legal, health, and housing is beneficial to everyone.

***SHORT TERM: Promote the development of inclusive workplaces throughout the region***

**Key deliverables:**

- 1) Advocate for organizations and business to create diversity councils or similar groups
- 2) Create a diversity council at Niagara Region
- 3) Highlight and promote organizations that are successful in being inclusive
- 4) Support cultural sensitivity/diversity training in workplaces, schools, places of recreation and worship, in the legal community and law enforcement

**Proposed role of the Region:** Lead, with support from other organizations

**Key partners:** LAMs, LIP, local businesses, educational institutions.

***INTERMEDIATE: Enrich the local settlement service landscape***

**Key deliverables:**

- 1) Work with local services providers and libraries to provide language learning options, including distance learning
- 2) Support development of access and improvement to regional and local services, including housing, social services, transit, child care, inclusive education programs, access to health care, recreation, financial services, public legal information, crime prevention, support for crime victims, public safety, etc.
- 3) Work with current programs and places of first contact to improve services and information (I.e. Settlement Worker in Schools (SWIS); border guards)

**Proposed role of the Region:** Collaborative lead (ongoing work), support other organizations

**Key partners:** Local service providers, places of first contact, local businesses, educational institutions.

***INTERMEDIATE: Support local internship programs***

**Key deliverables:**

- 1) Develop/enhance existing internship program with Brock and Niagara College
- 2) Work with local stakeholders to support workplace internship programs or job shadowing programs
- 3) Evaluate Niagara Region mentoring and work placement program

**Proposed role of the Region:** Support other organizations/Lead

**Key partners:** Brock, Niagara College, local businesses

***LONG TERM: Advocate for policies that foster the attraction and retention of immigrants***

**Key deliverables:**

- 1) Advocate around persistent barriers to access regulated professions
- 2) Support credential recognition and employment bridging programs

- 3) Advocate for policies that help international students transition to permanent residence
- 4) Advocate for improving processes of recognizing international certifications/credentials
- 5) Lobby for the expansion of the provincial nominee program (for example, like Manitoba)
- 6) Support policies to improve public transit, affordable housing, affordable child care and social assistance.

**Proposed role of the Region:** Support other organizations

**Key partners:** LAMs, LIP; local businesses; educational institutions; NCO; NWPB; all Chambers of Commerce.

## 5. Conclusion

The timing of this project provides the opportunity to plan for the future in a positive way. Current residents believe that Niagara is friendly and attractive and understandably, do not want to lose what they consider to be the ‘essence’ of the region in its natural diversity and environmental assets. New migrants share some of the same sentiments, while conversely desiring a greater diversity in local culture and the need to be valued and integrated in the community.

Successful immigrant attraction and retention requires multiple coordinated actions and an investment of resources over a period of years. By promoting the strengths identified in this report and working with various partners and stakeholders to address the opportunities, Niagara Region will be able to effectively use resources and act prudently to realize global attractiveness. The choice to grow in population and to welcome diversity is a choice for the future, and the very prosperity of the region hangs upon it.

*I think right now Niagara is an excellent place to live with a huge amount of potential for development and improvement in the next 5 to 10 years. If Niagara did not have the planned changes in place however I think I would suggest other communities over Niagara. –Survey Respondent*

Economic prosperity requires regions to be nimble, flexible, and able to adapt and move on in a deliberate, thoughtful way “with the times”. Simply, if Niagara cannot attract and retain skilled, energetic workers across diverse backgrounds and with diverse interests, both personal and professional, Niagara will not achieve economic prosperity. The case is clear for attraction and retention of groups beyond the current trends. There is also evidence that with people, come jobs. So the support of diversity also supports job creation, which helps with retention – a connected circle towards prosperity that relies on the foundation of “welcoming”. With Niagara’s history, commitment, and passionate and well qualified people, this workplan is very achievable.

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## Appendix A: Literature Study

### Why does Niagara need immigrants?

Canada's skilled immigrants are knowledge workers and can supplement existing working populations. Indeed, Canadian immigration policy has shifted to a more employer-driven model in which immigrants will be selected for specific skills as well as requirements related to education, work experience and language ability (see Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada website; Economist article: No Country for Old Men, 2015; for a critique of the new Express Entry system, see Canadian Chamber of Commerce 2016). As noted in the Niagara Region report *Looking Out to Focus In* (p. 21), "Niagara will need to leverage itself as a point of entry for new immigrants, providing an opportunity to retain and employ new talent in the region." Skilled immigrants can grow the knowledge economy, and newcomers can start businesses, drive innovation, and fill gaps in the labour market.

Some of the labour market gaps filled by immigrants can be found at the lower end of the skills continuum, as immigrants find entry-level positions in service and labour positions and take less desirable shifts. In the best case scenarios, these "survivor jobs" may be the first step on an upward trajectory, paying the bills while immigrants upgrade language and other skills and work to clear regulatory hurdles. However, research shows that immigrants in Canada face difficulties or delays in attaining work in the occupation for which they are trained particularly in regulated professions (i.e. engineering and medicine, see Boyd 2013), resulting in lower levels of employment or earnings at arrival compared to immigrants in the US (Kaushal et al., 2015). While relative faster economic assimilation takes place in the US, longitudinal research indicates that all wage growth amongst immigrants in Canada is confined to those who are in the country for at least 10 years (11-20 years and 20+ years) (Kaushal et.al, 2015). The implication of underutilization of immigrant skills in Canada was estimated at an aggregate earning loss of \$11.37 billion in 2006 (Reitz et al., 2014).

### Prosperity and Immigration

The attraction and retention of skilled immigrants is increasingly recognized as an essential component in economic development planning. Immigrants respond to economic growth. On the whole, immigrants are more mobile than native-born populations and more responsive to economic incentives (see Cadena & Kovak, 2013; Ottaviano & Peri, 2006). Booming economies attract immigrants, no matter where. As such, some communities have placed immigrant attraction and retention at the heart of their economic development strategies (OMAFRA, 2011, p. 7). If immigrants are not settling in an area, it is indicative of a lack of opportunities, or a lack of knowledge of existing opportunities.

A study by the New York-based Fiscal Policy Institute examined the 25 largest metropolitan areas in the U.S., starting in 1990 (Kallick, 2009). It found that wherever there was economic growth, there was a high proportion of immigration. And wherever there was immigration, there was economic growth. From 1990 to 2000, New York's economic growth rate was directly related to an increase in immigrants' share of the local labour force, the report found. They were also particularly crucial to the city's recovery of the 1970's population decline and its tax base erosion.

Across various research approaches and focusing on different variables, researchers indeed have found generally that immigration is associated with higher wages for most native-born workers, and with higher productivity (Lewis & Peri 2015). According to Lee (2015, p. 769), "The growing cultural diversity caused by immigration is seen as important for innovation." There is evidence of a "diversity dividend" that sees the vital skills, knowledge and ideas within a culturally heterogeneous workforce as boosting creativity, innovation and productivity. By this logic, diversity can be viewed as an economic asset to a region and a firm.

Recent research has probed the specifics of this connection. The skill level of immigrants has been identified as a factor. Lewis and Peri found evidence to suggest that "immigration induces natives to specialization in more complex jobs which complement immigrants' skills, and that it induces higher levels of innovation, both of which may contribute to the observed productivity impacts" (2015, p. 681). Research such as this suggests that there is a mutualism between immigrants and the native born population where both groups benefit from the symbiotic relationship.

Two other recent studies focus more on the impact of immigration through entrepreneurship. Using a dataset of over 2000 small and medium-sized enterprises in the UK, Lee (2015) finds strong evidence that innovation is specifically rooted in firms run by immigrants. These findings correspond with those of Rodríguez-Pose and Hardy (2015) whose research suggests that "culturally diverse regions tend to be more entrepreneurial, particularly with respect to more knowledge-intensive activities, and, more specifically, that diversity amongst the highly skilled matters most of all" (p. 393). These findings, although specific to the UK, would suggest regions that want the most economic impact should focus on attracting highly-skilled immigrant entrepreneurs.

## **The benefits of immigration**

The literature on immigration identifies multiple benefits of immigration to a community. Some of the reasons why immigration is particularly important to Niagara at this time are:

- **Immigrants are critical to stemming population decline.** Demographic analysis tells us that the future population growth in the Niagara will be almost entirely dependent on immigration. The consequences of our action or inaction regarding the movement of newcomers to the region will

determine whether this will continue to be a centre of vibrant culture and economic growth or a slowly decaying and aging region, both demographically and economically.

- **Immigrants have a strong work ethic**

The industriousness of immigrants is the stuff of legend. By virtue of the very act of immigration to Canada, newcomers show that they are risk-takers who possess the confidence to believe they can succeed in a new country, notwithstanding any linguistic, cultural or other barriers they may face. They are willing to work hard in pursuit of the goal of a better future for themselves and their families.

- **Immigrants on the whole have higher levels of education**

There is no more important driver to success in the new knowledge economy. Immigrants to Ontario over the past decade have been twice as likely to have a university degree than working age Ontarians. Not only do the foreign born have higher levels of education, many of them have backgrounds in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields which are precisely the fields critical to success in the new knowledge economy.

- **Immigrants contribute to Niagara's tax base and local economy**

About 17% of Niagara's residents are foreign born, according to the 2011 National Household Survey. They are established taxpayers and consumers. Niagara benefits from the significant buying power and tax revenue generated by immigrants.

- **Immigrants enrich cultural life**

Without immigration, Niagara would lack the breadth and diversity of its arts and cultural life, including restaurants, festivals, and imported retail goods. Nor would it have the range and quality of its social, religious and recreational infrastructure. The celebration and exposure of the arts and culture of Niagara's diverse communities is an indicator of the region's welcoming and international nature.

## **The business contributions of immigrants**

In addition to the vital importance of immigration generally, immigrants should be of particular interest to our local business and innovation sectors. Research indicates that immigrants are significant contributors and assets to building a new economic future. In numerous cities across North America, immigrant entrepreneurs are helping to drive the "talent, innovation and culture change" necessary to speed economic restructuring. Attracting immigrant knowledge workers is directly related to sustained economic growth and entrepreneurialism. Building on and promoting Niagara's existing diversity will also help us attract immigrant entrepreneurs, international companies and investors to the region.

In its report *Immigrants as Innovators Boosting Canada's Global Competitiveness* (Downie 2010), the Conference Board of Canada has found that immigrant entrepreneurs boost innovation, research, spark business ideas, expand trade relations, and bring greater foreign direct investment. The evidence indicates that immigrants can:

- **Increase Business Start Ups**

Immigrants are more likely to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities that create new jobs for themselves and others. Contrary to the myth of immigrants being job takers, they are the new job makers. They have higher rates of self-employment. Indeed, Conference Board of Canada research has found that first-generation immigrants are 20% more likely to have started a business than their Canadian-born peers. A recent study in Michigan examining data from 1996 to 2007 found that immigrants were more than three times as likely as native-born residents to start a new business.

- **Accelerate Economic Growth**

Immigration and growth are strongly correlated. A study by the New York-based Fiscal Policy Institute examined the 25 largest metropolitan areas in the U.S., starting in 1990 (Kallick 2009). It found that wherever there was economic growth, there was immigration. And wherever there was immigration, there was economic growth. From 1990 to 2000, New York's economic growth rate was directly related to an increase in immigrants' share of the local labour force, the report found. They were also particularly crucial to the city's recovery in the 1970's when the declining population was causing its tax base to erode.

- **Stimulate Innovation**

Immigrants bring new ideas and new ways of thinking to business opportunities. In the words of the Conference Board of Canada, "Immigrants tend to offer new and different perspectives on business, economic, and social challenges." A special report by TD Economics dated October 12, 2012 found that while immigrant entrepreneurs comprise 3% of all small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) across Canada, they represent 5% of what have been defined as innovative businesses, firms that spend more than 20% on research and development each year.

In the United States, immigrants invent patents at double the rate of non-immigrants, and nearly half of the top 50 venture-funded companies were founded or co-founded by immigrants during the period 1995 to 2005. Further, the immigrant-founded venture companies were clustered in the most innovative corners of the economy – high technology manufacturing, information technology and life sciences.

- **Access Global Markets and Increase Exports**

Exports directly benefit from the mere presence of immigrants. A number of studies show a strong correlation between the home-country information brought

by immigrants and increases in exports to those home countries. For example, research on Sweden's doubling of its exports from 2002 to 2007 suggests that for every 10% increase in the number of immigrants to Sweden from a specific country, Swedish exports increased to that country by 6%. For every additional 12,000 immigrants Sweden receives, exports increased by approximately \$1 billion.

With their linguistic and cultural knowledge immigrants offer connections to overseas markets. Attracting more immigrant entrepreneurs not only increases the variety of international connections but also helps to reduce information and relational barriers and other transaction costs to increasing exports. According to the Conference Board of Canada, immigrants "provide Canadian industries and businesses with a vehicle for accessing global markets by bringing the language skills, cultural insights, market knowledge, and business contacts needed to do so."

With future global economic growth predicted to occur primarily in the developing world where the economic development infrastructure and formal trade institutions may be relatively undeveloped, the home-country links that immigrants bring are that much more important.

- **Address Small Business Succession**

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) expects a majority of owners of small and medium enterprises to exit their businesses within the next decade, mainly due to retirement, with as many as two million jobs affected and an expected \$1 trillion transfer of assets. American experience suggests that attracting business people from around the world may help turn retirement trends into opportunities not only for immigrant entrepreneurs but also for their employees and the economy in general. The CFIB recommends that government "strive to attract more entrepreneurial workers and qualified business people from around the world who are interested in purchasing existing Canadian businesses." (Burce & Wong, 2012) The role of immigration in business succession was a central theme of discussion at the Conference Board of Canada's Entrepreneur and Investor Immigration Summit held in December 2016.

## **The literature on immigration to smaller communities**

In today's global markets, particularly with the advent of the Internet and so many real-time communication options, knowledge-based and other businesses can literally establish themselves almost anywhere in the world. In some sectors, geographic constraints on doing business have all but been eliminated. Does this have any impact on immigrant attraction to smaller communities?

While recent immigrants mostly settle in Canada's large cities, smaller communities have identified immigrants as a potential source of population and labour force renewal. Indeed, immigrants may enjoy various benefits of living in small communities. A 2008 Statistics Canada study found that immigrants fared better in smaller communities in various ways:

- immigrants in smaller areas quickly learn an official language because official language communication is more important in smaller areas than larger cities
- immigrants with less education in smaller areas fare better economically than immigrants with less education in larger cities
- refugees integrate quicker in smaller areas than in larger cities (Bernard 2008)

In the Conference Board of Canada report *Immigrant-Friendly Communities: Making Immigration Work for Employers and Other Stakeholders in Small-Town Canada*, the author identifies four components of successful attraction and retention of immigrants in small communities:

1. Immigration needs to be integrated with a community's long-term economic development strategy rather than used as a temporary solution for labour shortages or population decline.
2. Employment availability is essential, as are employer leadership and commitment when recruiting and retaining immigrant talent.
3. Building a critical mass of immigrants in a community is important for the long-term success of local immigration efforts, as most immigrants choose settlement destinations based on the presence of ethnic networks.
4. Attraction, settlement, integration, and retention of immigrants require concerted action involving numerous community stakeholders, including employers (Kukushkin 2009: 52).

The importance of social connections in the migration decision creates a challenge to Canada's smaller communities as they tend to have proportionally fewer immigrants than larger urban centres in the first place. A lack of infrastructure to facilitate immigrant settlement is also a factor. The major issues identified in the literature were lack of accessible language services for employed newcomers, lack of transportation, and lack of coordination among service providers (Reimer 2007). Overall, employment opportunities, social support, language, amenities, and community response continue to provide the key factors influencing both recruitment and retention of immigrants (Reimer 2007).

The Citizenship and Immigration Canada report *Towards a More Balanced Geographic Distribution of Immigrants* (2001) discusses ways in which governments can encourage a movement of immigrants away from the larger Canadian cities. Factors which attract workers to more rural areas are: money/wages, lifestyle preferences, amenities, level of education and access to professional development, opportunities for professional advancement, and opportunities for spouses. The analysis identifies provincial and

regional governments as being the key levels of government in terms of developing programs to attract and divert immigrants away from the large cities. Manitoba, for example, has recently been successful in attracting migrants to small towns when there are job openings. Its provincial nominee program aims to match skilled immigrants with specific job openings and, with involvement of local organizations from those smaller cities and towns. The Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) provides opportunities for employers to recruit and retain foreign skilled workers as a path to permanent residency. However, the Ontario program targets employers directly and lacks a local connection that draws new immigrants to smaller communities rather than large urban centres.

In general, population movements are highly influenced by regional economic growth rates, which is most often higher in larger cities. This appears to hold especially true for recent immigrants who are more geographically mobile than Canada's native-born population. There is some evidence that they are more likely to move to areas of economic opportunity. A recent study from Statistics Canada found that immigrants, especially recent immigrants, responded much more strongly to the economic boom in Alberta than did non-migrants and immigrants living in Canada for 15 years or more. These findings suggest that economic incentives do play a significant role in the behaviour of immigrants. While migration to Alberta does not necessarily entail migration to a small population centre, this study provides evidence that recent immigrants are more likely to move in response to employment prospects than are more established populations (Ostrovsky, Hou, and Picot 2011).

In a summary report from a conference hosted by the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF) and Rural Development Institute (RDI), concern was expressed over perceptions associated with rural Canada that might hinder attraction. Rural areas must effectively communicate the message that they offer more amenities and services than rural areas in other countries without the busy streets, sidewalks and traffic congestion of urban centres. Making new immigrants aware of all the opportunities and advantages associated with living in rural Canada is a priority and a matter to be addressed through programming initiatives.

Similarly, rural Canada has a misguided impression of immigration. Public opinion and attitudes often lack an understanding that immigrants wish to contribute actively to Canadian economy and society. Common stereotypes must be challenged, and immigrants must not be seen as a bundle of needs. This concern is captured in a 2009 report by the Ford Foundation which cites "distrust of newcomers" (not just immigrants, but also native-born newcomers) as a challenge to the successful development of rural economic clusters (Regional Technology Strategies 2009: 60).

As Walton-Roberts found in her study of the successful integration of Sikh immigrants in the Squamish, B.C. area, employment provided numerous benefits to newcomers. Employment not only provided economic security but also ensured wider community acceptance and active integration at the workplace (Walton-Roberts 2005). In their

introduction to the Special Issue of *Canadian Ethnic Studies* entitled “Thinking about Immigration outside of Canada’s Metropolitan Centres,” the authors note that – in the longer term -- settlement and integration are positively correlated with the presence of a developed and diversified economic base (Laaroussi and Walton-Roberts 2005). As important, however, is the need to include immigrants as full members of the communities in which they settle. According to Walton Roberts (2007:18):

The need to imagine and involve immigrants as central actors in wider community roles, be it as employees of local government, members on management boards of community groups, immigrant serving agencies, neighbourhood groups, and schools etc., is central to immigrant retention and building healthy, diverse communities.

In their examination of settlement patterns across rural Ontario, Di Biase and Bauder (2005) found uneven settlement, with some rural areas having high rates of immigrant concentration. Although these patterns did not appear to coordinate with labour market opportunities, the authors did conclude that economic opportunities were the key to attracting immigrants to rural areas: “Only the promise of better employment will attract immigrants away from urban centres that offer a sufficient level of immigrant services, high access to ethnic networks, and a range of cultural institutions that rural areas and small towns are unable to provide.” (p.131). Based on interviews, Di Biase and Bauder (2005: 131) made several recommendations for attracting immigrants to smaller communities:

- Smaller cities and need to provide adequate settlement and employment services to immigrants.
- Information about existence of such services must reach immigrants in order to influence their settlement decisions, e.g., Internet or outreach programs.
- Immigrants’ skills should be coordinated with local economic development strategies (also a finding of earlier research). Opportunities to work in one’s field of training are strong attractors.

In brief, attraction and retention is built on several key factors, most notably economic opportunities and acceptance and inclusion into the receiving community. The importance of these factors is reinforced in the articles comprising the issues of *Our Diverse Cities* (Frideres 2006, Reimer 2007) that focus on local integration strategies employed in smaller communities such as Sherbrooke, London, Sudbury, Halifax, PEI, and Moncton that lack the infrastructures and resources available in larger centres.

## **Practical tools for immigrant attraction and retention**

At a time when the Immigration Minister was very interested in the regional dispersal of immigrants around the country, Policy Roundtable Mobilizing Professions and Trades (PROMPT) released its Smart Settlement report based on extensive consultations and discussion (Triple S. Community-building 2005). The widely-cited report promoted a



model that would use community development processes to attract and retain immigrants to smaller cities in Ontario. The model focuses on creating horizontal relationships between migrants and receiving communities. It is a model of community building rather than attracting and utilizing immigrants as labour commodities.

In 2007 the National Working Group on Smaller Centre Strategies received funding from CIC to develop a “tool box” of ideas for attracting and retaining immigrants for smaller centres (National Working Group on Small Centre Strategies 2007). Entitled *Attracting and Retaining Immigrants*, the tool box contains various information and ideas to help diverse smaller centres to successfully implement strategies for attracting and retaining newcomers. Interestingly, there is no focus on attracting business owners or persons wishing to create new businesses. The 88-page guide contains only one short paragraph noting that self-employment can also be a viable employment option for immigrants (found on p.36).

Most recently, the Ontario government developed its CIRRO tool (OMAFRA 2011). Short for “Community Immigrant Retention in Rural Ontario,” the CIRRO report identifies steps for community action, including community engagement, municipal stewardship, recruiting local champions, establishing a steering committee, and organizing community forums. It also presents tips for building knowledge within a community, such as SWOT analysis and identifying resources. This guide is well-conceived and practical. Depending on the region or municipality in question, much of this same groundwork may have already been conducted by local immigration partnerships or in the work that went into designing an immigration portal.

## Appendix B: Data Sources on Immigration in Niagara

There are several sources of regional and local data on immigration and immigrants. Some data sources measure the “flow” of immigrants into and out of an area, while others such as the census measure the “stock” of immigrants who are present. Flow data provide an indication of trends in mobility and immigrant attraction whereas stock data capture demographic snapshots of persons who have settled within an area over time.

**Official landing data.** Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is the federal department responsible for immigration. At the time of immigration, it asks immigrants to identify their intended destination in Canada and this data is grouped under selected “urban areas” (Census Metropolitan Areas or CMA’s<sup>8</sup>).

It is important to note that these landing figures capture intended rather than actual destinations of immigrant flows. Immigrants to Canada may change their destinations or move soon after arrival to a new destination, and this is not captured in the data.

This data is available in the aggregate at no cost in the annual Facts and Figures reports, which includes some analysis by CMA. To obtain data on census divisions, a custom data purchase is required.

**URL:** <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/menu-fact.asp>

Data in this report by Wayland Consulting is based on a custom data purchase from IRCC (then named CIC) and spanned 2005 to March 2015, the most recent data available at the time of purchase. It is cited in the bibliography of this report as:

CIC (Citizenship and Immigration Canada). 2015a. Niagara, Ontario (Intended Census Division of Destination). Custom data purchase October 2015. Ottawa: CIC.

**Canadian Census.** Another way of examining immigrant populations within a city or region is to look at “stock” data or who is actually residing there. Census data provides the gold standard for stock data. Unfortunately, the long form Canadian census was replaced by the voluntary National Household Survey (NHS) for 2011, leaving us without reliable, detailed, recent data until the release of the 2016 Census data occurs in 2017. The first wave of 2016 Census data was released in February 2017, with detailed population and dwelling counts included in this report at the regional, provincial and national levels.

Six official 2016 Census data releases are scheduled between February and November 2017. Two that are relevant to this research are:

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<sup>8</sup> Niagara CMA data does not include West Lincoln or Grimsby.

**Immigration and ethnocultural diversity:** immigration, place of birth, ethnic origin, visible minorities, language and religion. Release date October 25, 2017.

**Mobility and migration:** mobility status and interprovincial migration based on the mobility 1 year ago and 5 years ago questions. (does not distinguish immigrants from Canadian-born). Release date November 29, 2017.

**URL:** <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm>

**Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB).** This database is managed by Statistics Canada on behalf of a federal-provincial consortium led by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). It combines linked administrative immigration and tax data files to provide a comprehensive source of data on the socio-economic outcomes of the immigrant taxfiler population in Canada. The overall linkage rate is approximately 87%. It was created to examine short and long-term income dynamics, poverty, inequality, role of income support programs, and financial well-being among immigrants to Canada.

The IMDB is comprised of Canadian immigrant tax filers between 1982 and 2013 (as of November 1, 2016). Immigrants are included in the database if he or she obtained permanent resident status or a non-permanent resident permit since 1980 and filed at least one tax return since 1982. Each year the IMDB is updated with new immigrant cohorts and new taxation data. Non-permanent residents in possession of at least one refugee claim, work, study or temporary resident permit are also added each year. Individuals admitted in previous years may be added later on if they are subsequently linked to a tax record.

The inclusion of temporary residents such as international students and temporary foreign workers alongside permanent residents in the IMDB creates challenges in quantifying immigrant attraction and retention to the Niagara region.

This dataset is not available to the general public. Users with access can complete custom analysis of the data for a fee. Niagara Region can work with public universities, such as Brock, to access and analyse this data.

**URL:** <http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=5057>

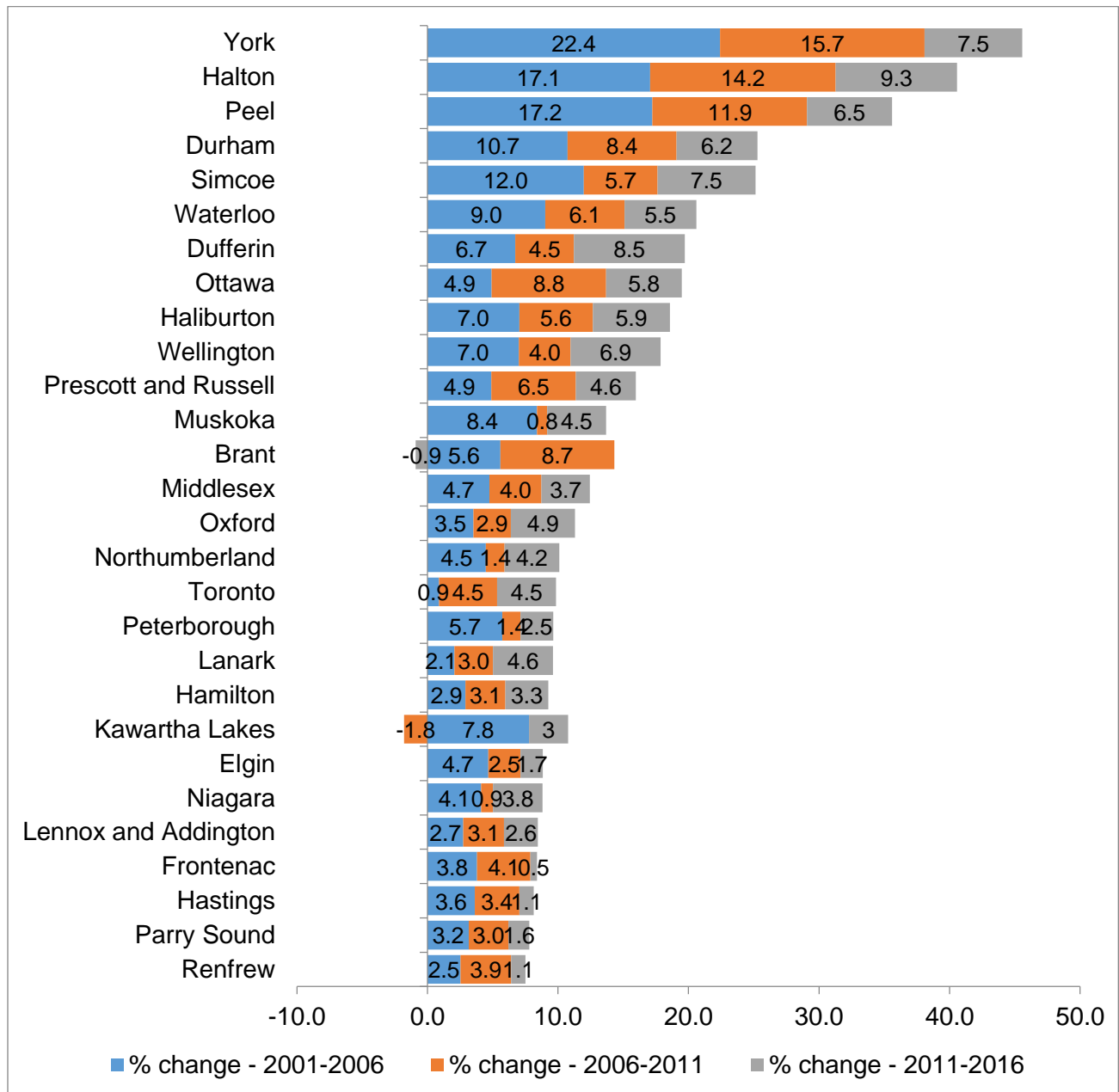
For more discussion of the IMDB, refer to these presentation slides: Athanase Barayandema, *Use of the Longitudinal Immigration database (IMDB) to Inform Immigration Research*, Statistics Canada, 2015. <http://p2pcanada.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2015/01/Athanase-Barayandema.pdf>

**Disaggregated Data.** Micro data Master files could be useful for further research. Micro data Master files contains disaggregated information on each respondent including variables suppressed in the public file, i.e lower levels of geography (e.g., CMA and postal code) and more detailed variable coding (e.g., additional categories of income and education) and variables at a continuous scale (e.g., age). Challenges may arise

with using disaggregated data when trying to build a sub-regional view of a data set with small sample sizes. For more details see link.

**URL:** <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/rdc/index>

## Appendix C: Population Growth (Percentage), 2001-2006, 2006-2011 and 2011-2016, of the 28 top growing Census Divisions<sup>9</sup>



Source: Statistics Canada (2007; 2017)

<sup>9</sup> There are a total of 49 Census Divisions in Ontario. Only the top 28, according to total population growth from 2001-2016, are represented here. The remaining 21 CDs had a total population growth of 7.5 per cent or lower.

## Appendix D: Profile of Research Participants

### Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted with newcomers (n=36), Niagara Region immigrant staff (n=20), international students (n=9), service providers (n=7), and business owners (n=4) in Niagara. In total, 9 focus groups with 76 participants were conducted during the months of July and October 2016. In addition, information was gathered via individual interviews from several key informants unable to attend the focus group sessions.

Focus groups were held at Niagara Regional offices in Thorold, Gilmore Lodge Nursing Home in Fort Erie, Fort Erie Multicultural Centre, Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre in St Catharines, and the Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre. Among the newcomers, Niagara Region immigrant employees and international students that were consulted, the ethnic diversity of this sample represents 30 different countries from around the world, and reflects the top 20 source countries of recent arrivals in Niagara as seen in Figure 2.

Focus groups are generally held to provide more in-depth insight into the perspectives of various populations; they are not meant to be representative samples, and they allow for probing of shorter survey responses. Focus group findings reinforce the contents of the literature study, particularly sections on the stages of settlement/needs extending beyond the settlement sector, factors that influence place of settlement and decisions to live in smaller communities.

Table 1: Total Number of Focus Groups and Participants

Type	Date	Number of Focus Groups	Number of Participants
Newcomers	OCT 2016	3	36
Niagara Region Immigrant Staff	JUL 2016	3	20
International Students	JUL 2016	1	9
Service Providers	JUL 2016	1	7
Business Owners	JUL 2016	1	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>76</b>

Table 2: Newcomer Focus Group Participants

Number of Participants n=36	Number of Years in Canada
23	< 1
5	1-2
6	3-5
2	6-7

Table 3: Niagara Region Immigrant Employee Focus Group Participants

Number of Participants n=20	Number of Years in Canada
1	1-5
7	6-10
5	11-15
4	16-20
3	21+

Table 4: Country of Birth of Combined International Focus Group Participants  
(Newcomers, Niagara Region Immigrant Staff & International Students)

International Focus Group Participants		
Afghanistan	India	Philippines
Angola	Iran	Saud Arabia
Brazil	Iraq	Slovakia
China	Jamaica	South Korea
Colombia	Kazakhstan	Sudan
Congo	Kuwait	Sweden
Dominican Republic	Liberia	Syria
Eritrea	Mexico	Thailand
Ethiopia	Nigeria	Turkey
Haiti	Peru	Ukraine

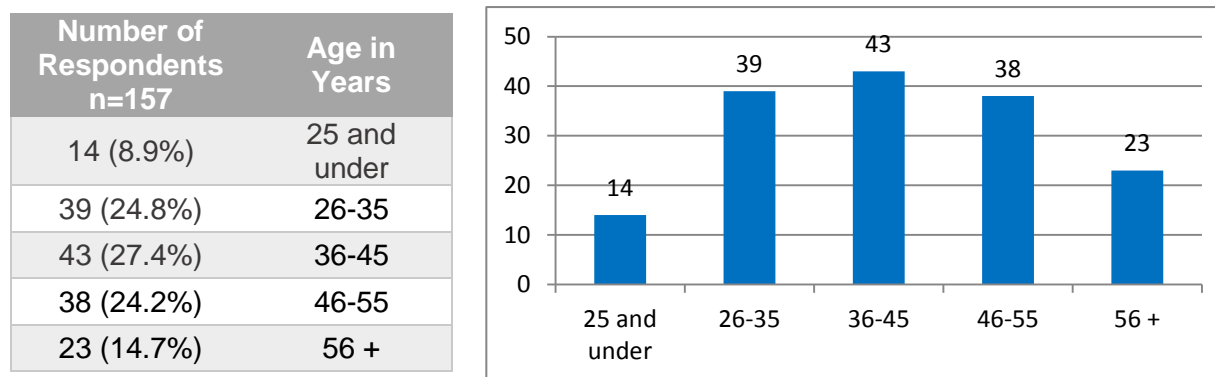
## Niagara Region Employee Survey

An online survey was completed by 157 Niagara Region Employees in July 2016.

Table 5: Number of Years in Niagara for Niagara Region Survey Respondents

Number of Respondents n=157	Number of Years in Niagara
7	< 1
20	1-5
23	6-10
98	10+
9	Not currently living in Niagara

Table 6: Age of Niagara Region Survey Respondents



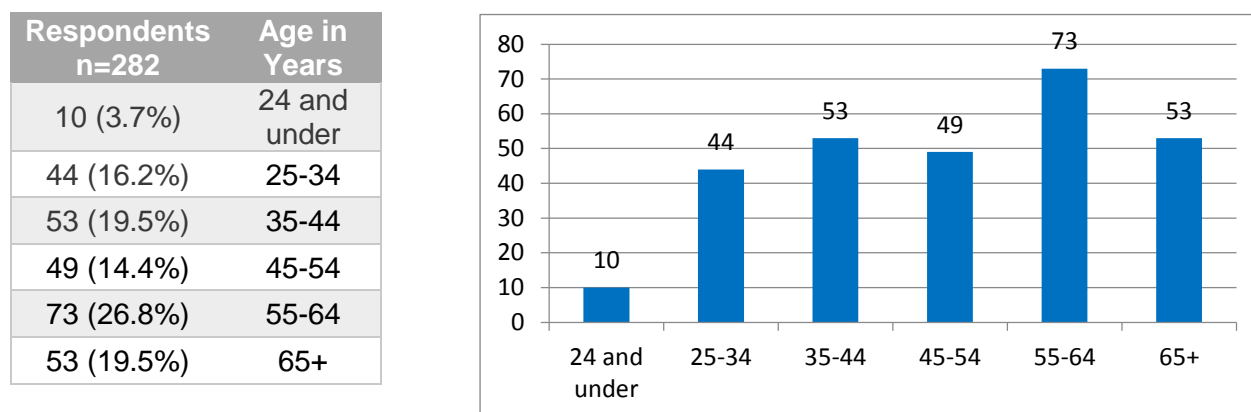
## Homeowners and Builders Survey

Concurrent to the focus groups and Niagara Region employee survey, a Homeowners and Builders survey was conducted by PMA Brethour Group for Niagara Region. Surveys were mailed to all the new homes that were built in the last five years in Niagara (n=2357), and 354 surveys were returned (16% response rate). The majority of respondents (77%) were born in Canada (n=264), however most (70%, n=225) moved to Niagara in the past ten years. Most of the respondents (77%) are married or common-law. (Not all respondents answered every question.)

Table 7: Number of Years in Niagara for PMA Homeowners and Builders Survey Respondents

Respondents n=320	Number of Years in Niagara
52	< 1
88	1-2
67	3-5
18	6-10
95	Over 10

Table 6: Age of PMA Homeowners and Builders Survey Respondents





## Appendix E: Actions already taken

Since the initiation of the Global Attractiveness project in May 2015, the working group has spent 18 months conducting a literature study, data collection and stakeholder engagement. Throughout the duration of this project a number of quick wins were identified and acted upon, with thanks to the One Team approach across Regional departments. While this is not a comprehensive list, some activities include:

Creating better communication:

- Improvements to the translation functionality of the niagararegion.ca website
- Improvements to the translation functionality of the niagaraimmigration.ca website
- Improvements to signage within Niagara Region headquarters
- Updated niagararegion.ca website to have more inclusive images

Forum, consultation, or conference participation:

- Engaged in a cross border forum on improving trade across the Greater Niagara International Border
- Engaged in a conference involving North American regulatory colleges with a focus on international qualification recognition for regulated professionals
- Niagara Region participation in the 2016 Federal Consultation on the future of Immigration across Canada

Niagara Region staff training or communications:

- Niagara Region Public Health hosted a training on 'hostmanship' (the art of making people feel welcome) with broad participation from internal external government partners
- Local Area Municipal CAO support through attendance at a Regional CAO meeting
- Initial staff presentation to Niagara Regional Council

Community engagement and support:

- Consultation and support from key local stakeholders such as Brock University, Niagara College, Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce, Niagara Workforce Planning Board, Niagara Folks Arts, YMCA and Niagara Health System
- Niagara Region support in the placement of Syrian refugees across Niagara