



# Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in Red Deer, Alberta

This community report is part of the “Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in CIC’s Western Region” study.



Population (2014): 98,585 residents.

Source: 2014 Municipal Census

## Permanent Resident Landings Red Deer 2008-2013

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada



UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA



**Data sources: 4 Service Providing Organizations (SPOs)** receiving funding from CIC, Provincial, private, municipal, and other sources.

- Findings validated locally

## SETTLEMENT SERVICES



### Top services offered

Red Deer has a well-developed settlement service sector with all possible services listed (appendix A) being offered by the participant organizations or someone in the community.



### Key gaps identified

- Interpretation services
- Shortage of available ESL classes
- Tailored language training
- Affordable child care and transportation
- Inadequate capacity at SPOs



### Barriers to access services

- English language proficiency
- Lack of information/confusion on how to access existing services
- Lack of affordable childcare
- Ineligibility for services
- Some clients live in nearby rural areas and lack transportation



### Top services needed

- Language training and upgrading of schooling
- Job specific language training
- Help with setting up a business and finding a job
- Civic engagement and inter-cultural exchange



### Services needed by newcomers ineligible for CIC funded services

Language training, information and orientation, mentorship and networking, social support, financial support (for refugee claimants and international students)

## PARTNERSHIPS



Red Deer has a well-developed and diverse service provider partnership network. The most commonly identified partnerships exist with schools/school boards, municipal offices, and child and family services. There was an identified need to bring businesses and employers into consultation with settlement organizations.

## INTEGRATION IN COMMUNITY



The perception among participants is that it is very difficult or somewhat difficult for newcomers to settle in Red Deer. This is mainly due to cultural barriers and problems accessing the labour market. Issues with language training, lack of Canadian work experience, and foreign credential recognition are seen as key barriers for newcomers to find a job in Red Deer. Service providers pointed to the need for greater civic engagement and social integration among newcomers.

# IMMIGRATION SETTLEMENT SERVICES AND GAPS IN CIC'S WESTERN REGION: Red Deer, Alberta

## Introduction

The purpose of this project is to better understand the settlement and integration services available to newcomers and to explore the service gaps and opportunities in Red Deer, Alberta and 28 other rural communities across Western Canada. This research offers a current snapshot of Red Deer by providing information gathered from a sample of local service providers. It is not a comprehensive review of all settlement services in Red Deer. Data was collected in October and November 2014 from four organizations that serve newcomers in Red Deer through a telephone survey completed by a representative from each organization. Three of the four organizations received funding from CIC, in addition to a variety of other funding sources. Three survey respondents participated in a feedback session on the primary survey findings via teleconference held in December 2014.

## Background

Red Deer is a city in central Alberta located near the mid-point of the Calgary-Edmonton Corridor. The economy in Red Deer is mainly focused on the oil and gas services sector and agriculture. Due to rapid economic development, the community has almost doubled in size since the 1980's. According to the 2014 municipal census, Red Deer has a diverse population of 98,585 residents.

## Community Settlement Concerns

Service provider representatives felt that the number of newcomers settling in Red Deer had increased substantially in the last five years and now represents between 10-25% of the community's overall population. The main explanation for this growth in the newcomer population is rooted in employment demand and the substantial increase in the volume of temporary foreign workers (TFWs) entering the city, and an associated increase in permanent residents and family reunifications in the city. The majority of the participants felt newcomers faced a number of acute challenges. Some of these challenges were identified in the follow-up consultations and include limited access to the labour market, the need for more comprehensive settlement services and issues with social integration experienced

by some ethnic communities in Red Deer. It was noted that some minority communities arrive and do not find adequate inter- and intra-community networks and support systems. Two participants suggested it was difficult and two suggested it was somewhat difficult (for a total of four) for newcomers to get jobs. This difficulty was linked to English language proficiency and a lack of Canadian work experience / foreign credential recognition. In particular, more highly skilled newcomers find it difficult to locate suitable employment – often taking unskilled work out of economic necessity.

During the follow-up consultation participants noted the need for a municipal information hub where newcomers can access information on available services, improved domestic violence related services, and better job training for adults and youths looking for more skilled jobs. There was also a recognized need for better civic engagement among newcomers, non-volunteer-based translation services and improved counselling / mental services for women and children. Moreover, due to financial and transportation related limitations, newcomers based in rural areas have difficulty accessing necessary services, and service providers drew attention to the fact that a number of newcomers from surrounding communities use Red Deer as a hub for settlement services. As a result, their presence adds to the existing strain on service providers.

## Available Settlement Services

Red Deer has a well-developed settlement and integration service sector with all services listed (27 key services – see appendix A) being offered by the participant organizations or someone in the community. All services listed were identified as needing to be expanded, which is not surprising given the growth in the newcomer population in Red Deer. In particular it was noted during the follow-up that there was a shortage of ESL classes in Red Deer.

Participants indicated that certain classes of newcomers did not have adequate access to CIC-funded services, such as temporary foreign workers (TFW). Other barriers to accessing services were identified by participants. During the follow-up consultations participants identified that among these groups there is a general confusion around how to access services. Limited hours of services and

transportation issues can also create barriers to access.

All participants indicated that they provide services to at least one group of newcomers who are ineligible for CIC-funded services. Ineligible groups include temporary foreign workers, new and returning naturalized Canadian citizens, refugee claimants, and international students. The top services most needed by ineligible groups include language training, information and orientation, mentorship and networking, social support, and financial support (for refugee claimants and international students).

## Tracking and Planning

All four participating service providers reported that their organization was guided by a strategic plan and that they regularly, either independently or in partnership, assessed the service needs of the newcomers in their community. These needs assessments took a variety of forms (i.e., survey, community mapping, meeting, discussions with clients, focus groups, interviews, and review of client analysis records) and were conducted as frequently as monthly or annually.

## Specific Capacities

In Red Deer, the SPOs that participated in the survey had strong organizational capacity. All organizations felt they had existing capacity to communicate with stakeholders, meet reporting requirements, and coordinate services with other stakeholders. However, three organizations identified that they did not have adequate capacity to provide services in both official languages. More capacity is needed to meet the needs of a growing client-base, and the following 3 needs were cited most often: more staff, financial support, and staff training for improved service delivery.

## Partnerships

All participants reported being engaged in partnerships with other community organizations in providing settlement, integration and welcoming services. Although generally informal, and created on a program-to-program basis, it is evident that Red Deer has a well-developed service provider network. Participants indicated that there were existing partnerships among all 21 community partners listed in the survey (see appendix B). The most commonly reported partners were schools/school boards, municipal offices, and child and family services.

As indicated during follow-up consultations, some participants voiced concerns that governments at the provincial and federal level underestimate the needs of smaller cities when providing necessary services to newcomers. Service providers pointed out that both small and large cities deliver the same services on a different scale. There was also an identified need to bring businesses and employers into consultation with settlement organizations. This was seen as key to educating employers about the benefits of hiring newcomers and finding those newcomers better quality jobs.

Given the level of partnering and the number of partnerships that currently exist in Red Deer, this community would be a candidate for an LIP.

## Research Team

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## Appendix A – List of Possible Services

### SETTLEMENT

- Greeting upon arrival/initial reception
- Information and orientation
- Needs assessment and referral
- Interpretation services
- Language assessment
- Language training
- Help finding housing
- Help with daily life (e.g., registering for school, getting a bank account)
- Transportation support

### ECONOMIC

- Help finding a job
- Educational upgrading
- Recognition of foreign credentials
- Investment opportunities
- Job-specific language training
- Help setting up a business
- Occupational/business mentorship and networking
- Financial supports

### SOCIAL

- Childcare
- Cultural Events
- Recreational services
- Legal support/referral
- Health Services
- Mental Health Services
- Social inclusion/ integration support
- Services for seniors
- Services for women
- Services for youth

## Appendix B – Possible Organizational Partnerships

1. School/School Boards
2. Umbrella organizations
3. Newcomers (individuals)
4. Housing services
5. Settlement service providers
6. Health services
7. Municipal offices/ EDO
8. Civil society groups
9. Francophone organizations
10. Language training providers
11. Children/Family services
12. Businesses
13. Chambers of Commerce
14. Police Force
15. Universities/Research Networks
16. Ethno-cultural groups
17. Religious organizations
18. Public libraries
19. Foundations
20. Labour Market Services
21. Other: Immigrant Consultants