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Item No. 21.3
Halifax Regional Council
July 8, 2025

TO: Mayor Fillmore and Members of Halifax Regional Council

FROM: Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: April 9, 2025

SUBJECT: Year 4 Immigration Strategy Update

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

As set out in HRM's Regional Business Plan, the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO) committed to a comprehensive municipal immigration strategy. On July 12, 2022, Regional Council approved the Immigration Strategy 2022–2026 to build on past newcomer plans and integrate with the Diversity & Inclusion Framework. Now entering Year 4, this report reviews progress from April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025.

BACKGROUND

Immigration continues to be a driving force behind HRM's dynamic growth and social vitality. Our municipality's ability to attract, retain, and integrate newcomers shapes economic development, addresses labour market needs, and enriches cultural diversity. Since the Immigration Strategy's approval in July 2022, HRM has worked diligently to operationalize 34 targeted actions designed to remove barriers, improve service delivery, and strengthen community connections for immigrants and newcomers.

Over the first three years, HRM established foundational programs such as the Welcomed in Halifax pass multilingual policy development, and dedicated training modules that enhanced access to recreation, improved communications, and fostered intercultural understanding. Entering Year 4, the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSIO has deepened interdepartmental collaboration, expanded capacity-building measures, and leveraged strategic partnerships to build on these successes.

Through five interconnected pillars: Inclusive Public Service; Safe, Respectful, and Inclusive Work Environment; Equitable Employment; Meaningful Partnerships; and Accessible Information and Communication this update highlights key initiatives and measurable outcomes from April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025. By embedding equity and inclusion into core municipal functions, HRM is committed to creating a city where every newcomer can fully participate, contribute, and thrive.

In late 2024, IRCC announced a reduction in permanent resident targets, from 500,000 to 395,000 in 2025, with further decreases planned through 2027. New volume controls on temporary residents were also introduced. While immigration policy is a federal responsibility, these changes highlight the importance of strong local immigrant services. With fewer newcomers arriving, effective settlement and retention efforts at the municipal level are essential to support population growth and community integration.

DISCUSSION

Below is a summary of Year 4 accomplishments by strategic pillar.

1. Inclusive Public Service

- Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO: Developed Pathways to Stay (international student Permanent Resident guide) and a business start-up guide for immigrant entrepreneurs. These two practical guides support newcomers in navigating complex systems by providing a reliable source of information and reducing the knowledge barriers that often prevent access to permanent residency and business development resources. Created a multilingual legal glossary for newcomer youth and their families to promote legal literacy and help them better understand their rights and responsibilities in Canada.
- Supported the Emergency Management Office's newcomer engagement planning and coordinated HRFE's mosque visit. Participated Safe City & Safe Public Spaces Program's Community Safety Assessment App pilot to enhance immigrant women's safety.
- Parks & Recreation (P&R): Youth Advocate Program served six newcomer families. P&R is advancing the hiring of a newcomer-focused youth advocate worker. George Dixon Centre hosted several newcomer focused activities including movie nights, Zumba for Muslim women, and Easter brunches. Welcomed in Halifax program issued 145 passes resulting in \$108,110.85 in recreation discounts at HRM operated and partner facilities. The Canada Games Centre hosts newcomer-focused activities and works with ISANS to support newcomers access to the facility through the Welcome in Halifax program.
- Corporate Communications: Promoted Regional Council's [Combatting Islamophobia and Improving the Safety of Muslim Women and Girls](#), Asian Heritage Month, and World Refugee Day via announcements and social media.
- Halifax Transit: Participated in the Mayor's Reception for International Students. Planned 2025 Accessibility Transit Code campaign with multilingual "How to Ride Transit" resources.

2. Safe, Respectful, and Inclusive Work Environment

- Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO: Expanded internal capacity-building: Collaborated with Talent Development on an online D&I Overview training module to improve accessibility for staff with scheduling or operational barriers that prevent in-person attendance. The online option also increases overall training capacity and supports HRM's goal of delivering consistent, mandatory D&I education to all employees. Increased in-person sessions by 50% and room capacity from 16 to 24; updated D&I performance indicators to improve monitoring and accountability.
- Halifax Regional Police: Delivered hate crime information sessions, presented at HIP AGM; staff attended ISANS intercultural competence training; two officers trained in national Police Liaison methods.
- Halifax Fire & Emergency: Delivered "Building a Better Fire Service" training to 37 career and 73 volunteer recruits; released anti-Black racism modules; organized restorative conflict resolution, appreciation breakfasts, and staff barbecues; offered specialized accessibility and DEI training.

3. Equitable Employment

- Human Resources: Engaged 6,000+ candidates through job fairs (ISANS, Nova Scotia Works, Dalhousie, Study and Stay™, Out & Equal); hosted targeted sessions with INCA, YMCA; supported job posting sharing policy and newcomer mentorship; promoted Bridging the Gap program and participated in the Immigrant Youth Empowerment Forum.

- Halifax Regional Police: Conducted targeted recruitment outreach; adopted a four-year Diversity & Equity Recruitment Framework for Police Science Program classes (2025–2029).

4. Meaningful Partnerships

- In collaboration with Community Safety, the Immigrant Services Advisor supported the planning of a two-day Preventing Violent Extremism workshop; a hate crime information session with Dartmouth Masjid, Halifax Regional Police's Hate Crime Unit and Safe City & Safe Public Spaces Program. Work continues initiatives to strengthen youth engagement, improve coordination, and prevent community harms through education and partnership.
- Property, Fleet & Environment: Led HalifACT Youth Climate Action Fund outreach in Preston, Mulgrave Park, and North End; partnered with ISANS, Ulnooweg, and Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre for environmental justice programming; attended newcomer events (Mayor's Reception, HIP Fair, ISANS Open House).
- Halifax Fire & Emergency: Attended Get to Know Your Municipality event; participated in three HIP Civic Engagement meetings; sent 16 recruits to Ummah Masjid Mosque; initiated Sabeel Mosque partnership; launched Outreach & Cultural Inclusion programs; hosted open houses at five stations.
- Halifax Regional Police: Engaged in interfaith and multicultural newcomer events (EID, Interfaith Harmony Week); delivered Maritime Sikh Society and ISANS youth presentations. Participated in PVE workshops. Police Science Program recruits completed intercultural site visits.
- Community Safety: Partnered with the Centre for Migrant Worker Rights NS (CMWR-NS) to support the inclusion of migrant workers. Funded two pilots: an English language course focused on workplace skills and local integration, and a Welcome Bags initiative providing rights information and essential items to newly arrived migrant workers.
- Community Safety: Launched a storm-preparedness pilot with Feed Nova Scotia to provide 1,000–1,500 emergency food kits for refugees and international students, prioritizing communities with high food insecurity. Also led a multi-stakeholder recovery effort to preserve Common Roots Urban Farms (CRUF) following the closure of its host organization—ensuring continued access to gardening space for over 200 participants, the majority of whom are newcomers.

5. Accessible Information and Communication

- Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO: Multilingual Policy & Procedures being finalized and a communication plan in development for internal rollout.
- Corporate Communications: Produced multilingual print and digital materials (solid waste guides, event collateral).
- Public Works: Solid Waste Resources adapted the Master Composter Recycler program in partnership with ISANS to support newcomer education on waste sorting. Additionally, Hindi was added to the list of languages for waste sorting information, which now includes English, Arabic, French, Chinese, and Farsi.
- Property, Fleet & Environment: Distributed translated storm-preparedness and climate action materials at newcomer-focused events. This work supports Pillar 5 by providing accessible environmental information in multiple languages to help newcomers prepare for emergencies and participate in sustainability efforts. Ensuring that critical climate resources are understandable helps reduce communication barriers and promotes equity in municipal climate resilience strategies.
- Parks & Recreation launched multilingual materials and a video to ensure immigrants can access accurate and timely information about the new recreational registration system. These resources

reduce language barriers and support greater newcomer participation in community programming.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No additional financial implications.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There was no community engagement in the preparation of this report.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39, subsections 7A, 34(1) and 34(3) provide: 7A The purposes of the Municipality are to: (a) provide good government; (b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities. 34 (1) The Chief Administrative Officer is the head of the administrative branch of the government of the Municipality and is responsible to the Council for the proper administration of the affairs of the Municipality in accordance with the by-laws of the Municipality and the policies adopted by the Council. 34 (3) The Council shall provide direction on the administration, plans, policies and programs of the Municipality to the Chief Administrative Officer.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1- Condensed Immigration Strategy 2022–2026
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HALIFAX

Immigration Strategy 2022-26

**Welcoming immigrants and
valuing their contributions
to the Halifax Regional
Municipality**

Immigration plays a central role in the future of the Halifax Regional Municipality and helps to shape our vibrant and diverse communities. Our region's economic growth, social prosperity and workforce development largely depends on our capacity to retain immigrants and newcomers. In recent years, an increase in immigration to the Halifax region has contributed to unprecedented population growth.

In response, and to help newcomers feel at home, the municipality has launched the Immigration Strategy 2022-26. Approved by Halifax Regional Council on July 12, 2022, the Immigration Strategy is an updated version of the Welcoming Newcomers Action Plan developed in 2016. The updated strategy reflects a modern-day landscape and lays the foundation for more immigrant-friendly service delivery in the Halifax region for years to come.

To gather feedback on the proposed strategy, the municipality conducted two consultation sessions with new immigrants, asylum seekers and migrants. A third session engaged immigrant-serving organizations. Additionally, a survey on immigrant services was shared with business units in October, 2021, to collect input from municipal employees. The feedback received from both internal and external stakeholder groups was instrumental in the development of the strategy.

The **34 actions** outlined in the Immigration Strategy are aligned to the five goals of the municipality's Diversity & Inclusion Framework, which guides the work of the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office.



Diversity & Inclusion Framework

The five key objectives of the Immigration Strategy align with the five goals of the Diversity & Inclusion Framework:

Goals of the Diversity & Inclusion Framework		Objectives of the Immigration Strategy
1	Inclusive public service To ensure inclusive and equitable access and benefits of municipal services, programs and facilities.	To ensure that municipal services are inclusive, reflective of, and accessible to immigrants and newcomers without substantial barriers.
2	Safe, respectful and inclusive work environment To have a diverse and inclusive workplace free of harassment, discrimination and systemic barriers.	To create a workplace that embraces and facilitates equal participation and equitable growth for all immigrants and newcomers.
3	Equitable employment To have a skilled workforce that reflects the diverse residents of the municipality.	To attract and retain immigrant and newcomer talent into the municipality's workforce in a variety of positions.
4	Meaningful partnerships To develop positive and respectful internal and external partnerships that contribute to inclusive decision making.	To initiate and build internal and external partnerships that include immigrants, newcomers and immigrant-serving organizations.
5	Accessible information and communication To communicate, both internally and externally, in a way that demonstrates, exemplifies and embodies our municipal diversity and inclusion values.	To provide timely and accessible information to newcomers and immigrant communities about municipal programs and services.

The municipality's mission for diversity, inclusion and equity:

To remove systemic barriers that prevent the full participation of our residents, businesses, visitors and municipal employees in municipal programs and services.



Immigration Strategy and Implementation Plan

The Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO (D&I/ANSAIO) will lead the implementation of the strategy, supported by individual business unit action plans. D&I/ANSAIO will work with business units to support the development and implementation of the action plans by advising on best practices, supporting community engagement initiatives and helping to develop roadmaps to success.

Through business unit action plans, D&I/ANSAIO will support business units to:

- provide public service to immigrants and newcomers
- increase immigrant representation within municipal public engagement initiatives
- prioritize immigrant and newcomer engagement in the delivery of municipal services
- provide employment opportunities for immigrants and newcomers in alignment with the municipality's Employment Equity Policy and Fair Hiring Policy
- celebrate the contributions of immigrants throughout the community



Action Item Summary

Inclusive public service

Goal 1:

Ensure that municipal services are inclusive of immigrants and newcomers' needs.

The Halifax Regional Municipality will contribute to the successful integration of immigrants by improving accessibility to its programs and services.

1. Conduct annual inventory and evaluation of municipal services geared towards immigrants and newcomers
2. Hold employee awareness events (e.g. diversity cafés, awareness sessions)
3. Continue providing diversity and inclusion training modules
4. Incorporate immigrant and newcomers' voices in the development of new plans, policies and programs through community engagement
5. Continue providing Welcomed in Halifax (WIH) transit and recreation passes
6. Create and implement customer satisfaction survey about the use of the WIH pass
7. Schedule public engagement initiatives in spaces where immigrants are comfortable and during times that accommodate their diverse needs
8. Annually, host Mayor's International Students' Reception
9. Facilitate access to the affordable access program
10. Facilitate access for registration in recreation programs (MyREC)



Safe, respectful and inclusive work environment

Goal 2:

Create a workplace that facilitates the equal participation and growth for immigrants and newcomers.

The Halifax Regional Municipality will strengthen its policies and practices to ensure a workplace that values diversity and inclusion.

11. Review existing policies and practices to ensure that diversity and inclusion are supported and systemic barriers preventing the inclusion of immigrants and newcomers are addressed
12. Identify and reduce barriers that prevent the participation of immigrants in programs and services
13. Provide resources for employees to ensure awareness of policies related to diversity, inclusion and systemic barriers for immigrants
14. Employees at all levels of the organization participate in diversity and inclusion training
15. Diversity and inclusion are highlighted within the organization through internal communications
16. Partner with Local Immigration Partnership to host collaborative community-based events that support ongoing relationships with newcomer service groups
17. Host cultural competency sessions offered by Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) and other immigrant-serving organizations

Equitable employment

Goal 3:

Attract and retain immigrant talent.

The Halifax Regional Municipality will take all necessary steps to ensure employment within the municipality is attainable to immigrants.

18. Promote immigrants and newcomers' participation in municipal work placement opportunities
19. Continue reaching out and holding information sessions on job opportunities within the municipality
20. Ensure municipal representation at job fairs and community events geared toward immigrants
21. Collaborate with the Halifax Immigration Partnership and ISANS to create publications celebrating immigrant and newcomer communities and their impact on the municipality's economic development

Meaningful partnership

Goal 4: Build internal and external partnerships that include immigrants.

The Halifax Regional Municipality will develop strong partnerships with immigrants, government agencies and immigrant-serving organizations to respond to their needs and provide service accordingly.

- 22. Establish/maintain partnerships with immigrant-serving organizations to help ensure the successful integration of immigrants
- 23. Identify opportunities for the municipality to work with community partners to create an accessible, welcoming and inclusive municipality
- 24. Encourage initiatives aiming to enhance immigrant talent



Accessible information and communication

Goal 5:

The Halifax Regional Municipality will provide timely information about services available to immigrants.

The Halifax Regional Municipality will provide timely information about services available to immigrants and promote the Halifax region's position as a welcoming and prosperous community.

25. Update, maintain and promote the immigrant portal on halifax.ca
26. Ensure the use of plain language throughout communications
27. Establish a protocol regarding the translation of materials used to communicate information about municipal services
28. Provide entrepreneur immigrants with information on municipal regulatory requirements for start-up business
29. Reduce regulatory barriers for immigrant businesses by creating a human-centered customer approach to navigating services
30. Participate in the development of a pathway to immigration tool kit for international students
31. Support community events aiming to welcome immigrants and newcomers (e.g. Annual Welcome BBQ, Supper NOVA)
32. Continue hosting recreational activities and events that support immigrants integration
33. Work with ISANS and other immigrant-serving organizations to create recreation programs based on community interest
34. Promote the Fire Safety program to immigrants





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