

Immigration Plan for the City of North Bay, Ontario

October 2007

The Mayor's Office of Economic Development

The Corporation of the City of North Bay, Ontario

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1.0 Executive Summary

Northern Ontario is facing increasing economic and demographic challenges and North Bay is no exception. However; the City of North Bay is positively situated to respond to these pressures.

The strengths of the community include:

- Geographic location; accessibility to major centres in both Southern and eastern Ontario. Excellent transportation and telecommunications infrastructure.
- Diversified mix of multinational companies and local small and medium sized companies providing highly engineered products and services to global markets.
- Quality of life / Door-step access to nature
- Nipissing University & Canadore College with strong international marketing
- Relatively low rate of youth out-migration compared to other Northern Ontario municipalities
- New Regional Health Centre under construction among other construction projects

Despite these strengths, various reports indicate that skill shortages and an increasing senior population will require targeted measures in order to ensure North Bay's long-term economic growth. With that in mind, the Mayor's Office of Economic Development identified immigration as a priority area. This office also oversaw the creation of the North Bay Newcomer Network (NNN), an immigration committee with representation from community stakeholders.

The overall goals of NNN are to develop and implement strategies that will result in the attraction, settlement and retention of immigrants, and to build a welcoming community in North Bay. The group can now present a two-year track-record of successful immigration-related activities. Highlights include:

- Development and implementation of a year long research project to analyse the current immigration demographics and identify needs in North Bay.
- Proposals submitted for the delivery of settlement programming in North Bay (ISAP, Host, LINC).
- Establishment of an adult ESL program in North Bay
- Effective media engagement, resulting in several very positive portrayals of local immigrants and immigration in local media
- Hiring of a Diversity Outreach Coordinator through the Ontario Community Builders program
- Building community networks and engaging established immigrant, cultural, ethnic, and religious organizations

- Engaging the multicultural community through an expanded Canada Day celebration
- Honouring the achievements of immigrant women
- Familiarization tours with business immigrants from Toronto

NNN plans to intensify its immigration initiatives in the next few years. The group will also continue to take advantage of opportunities presented by various government agreements and programs, such as the Provincial Nominee Program and the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement.

Strategies include:

- Work with other Northern Ontario centres to enhance the national and international profile of the region
- Develop a comprehensive municipal immigration website through the assistance of the federal and provincial government's funding agreement to create municipal web portals.
- Work with employers to identify worker shortages; encourage employers and assist them to recruit foreign trained individuals from Toronto and other provincial centres, possibly using ethnic media to advertise.
- Stay alert to provincial opportunities to market North Bay.
- Hold sessions with international students to outline their options for staying in North Bay upon graduation; encourage them to apply for temporary resident visas and permanent residency.
- Organize and promote regular multicultural events, such as cultural entertainment at the annual Canada Day celebrations.
- Work with established immigrant communities to create a visible presence and profile in the community.
- Encourage local schools to welcome newcomer families and work with the children to overcome barriers to their active participation.
- Encourage the media to cover cultural events and highlight the accomplishments of local immigrants.
- Hold stakeholder consultations in order to further develop a formal Immigration Strategy for the City.

2.0 Introduction

Canada, along with many other nations, is experiencing an aging population and a declining population growth. Today, approximately one in eight Canadians is aged 65 or older. This situation will start accelerating in 2011, when the first baby-boomers turn 65. The results of the changed demographics include weakening public finances, declining diversity and increased workforce shortages.

In order to ensure future growth and develop sustainable communities, Canada has welcomed an average of about 240,000 newcomers each year for the last five years. Roughly two-thirds of Canada's population growth now comes from net international migration, with the major urban centres being the biggest recipients of newcomers.

Ontario continues to be the main attraction centre for immigrants to Canada. More than half of all new immigrants to Canada settle in Ontario and 84% of those settle in the Greater Toronto Area.¹ According to Statistics Canada, the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area has one of the highest proportions of foreign-born of all major urban centres in the world. About 44% of Toronto's population in 2001 was born outside Canada.

The majority of the immigrants to Canada are in the skilled worker and business immigrant categories. With specific advanced skills, they help fill shortages in the Canadian labour market. They also invest in our economy and, consequently, contribute to Canada's overall economic growth.

The City of North Bay's Mayor's Office of Economic Development has identified immigration as a key component of the City's economic development strategy. Immigration is considered a priority in order to address the community's imminent demographic challenges and shortage of skilled workers. With this in mind, the City has actively pursued a number of immigration-related activities for the last two years. It is determined to put the necessary arrangements in place to create a welcoming environment for newcomers and to prepare the community for this demographic change.

The purpose of this Immigration Plan is to provide an overview of the structures, activities and measures adopted in North Bay between 2005 and October 2007. The plan also outlines the goals and next steps in order to achieve the objectives of attracting, integrating and retaining newcomers, and of creating an open and friendly community for all.

3.0 North Bay in Focus

3.1 Background

Northern Ontario is facing increasing economic and demographic challenges and North Bay is no exception. As the “Gateway to the North”, however, located within a 3 ½ hour drive from Toronto and Ottawa, the City of North Bay is positively situated to respond to these pressures. Presented here is a concise overview of the current economic and demographic trends which we aim to address, at least in part, through the development of this strategic immigration plan.

3.2 Demographic Trends

From a provincial perspective, of the mid-sized urban centres and small towns with the quickest declining populations in Ontario in 2006, all were located in Northern Ontario (Kenora, Elliot Lake, Timmins, Kapuskasing, Kenora, Algoma, Parry Sound, Kirkland Lake).² The average population loss for these communities was 5.1%. The North Bay area fared much better and experienced a 1.8% increase in population.³ However, compared to Canada’s 5.4% increase and Ontario’s 6.6% increase, North Bay’s growth is far behind the national and provincial averages.

Today, 53,966 people live in the City of North Bay.⁴ The greater North Bay area (Township of Bonfield, Municipality of Callander, Township of East Ferris and City of North Bay) has a population of 63,424.

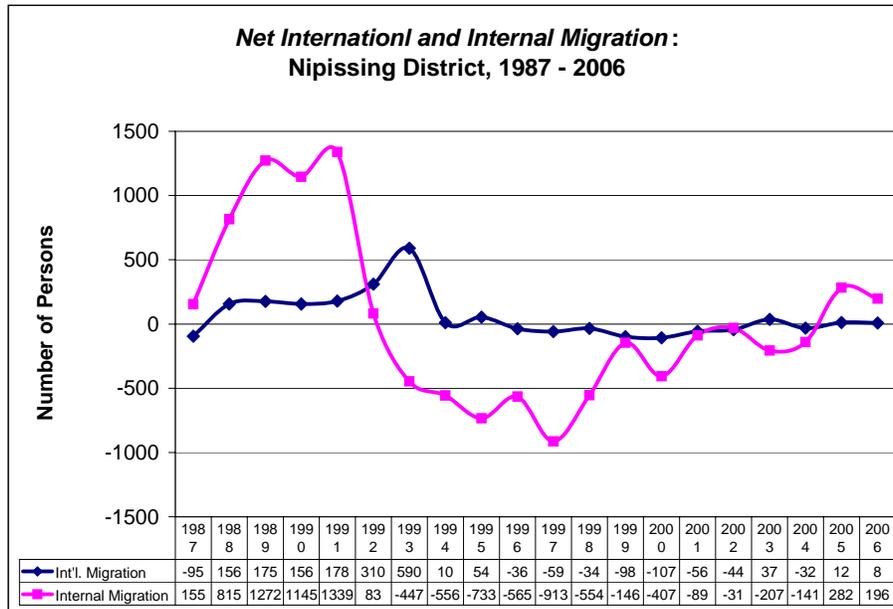
According to C.N. Watson and Associates Ltd., North Bay’s population is projected to grow at an annual rate of 0.25 – 0.37 between 2006 and 2031.⁵ However, from a provincial perspective, Nipissing District, in which the City of North Bay is located, is expected to lose nearly one-third of its population share relative to the Province of Ontario in that same time period.⁶ In fact, the projected growth will still be only one-tenth of the provincial growth rate.⁷ This growth will primarily be in the seniors’ age group and by 2031, seniors are anticipated to represent 21% of the population.

Youth out-migration also adds to the demographic concerns throughout northern Ontario, as young people leave the area in search of education and employment. However, studies suggest that the City of North Bay experienced a lower rate of youth out-migration compared to other Northern Ontario centres from 2001 – 2006.⁸

In terms of immigration, the late 80’s and early 90’s saw an influx of immigrants to the Nipissing District. This trend ceased in 1993, when both the international

and the internal migrations dropped. Recently, this declining trend has been reversed and immigration is showing some positive signs of growth again.⁹

Table 1



Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 051-0035. *Note:* Net International Migration = (immigrants - emigrants) – net temporary emigrants + returning immigrants + net non-permanent residents. Net Internal Migration = (interprovincial in – interprovincial out) + (intraprovincial in – intraprovincial out).

3.3 Workforce

The area has a labour force of approximately 53,850 and experiences an average unemployment rate of 7%. Although North Bay offers distinct cost of living advantages with overall housing prices more than 20% below market sales in communities of comparable size, 2001 Census data indicates average full-time earnings are 8% less than the provincial average.¹⁰

It is estimated that the local labour force will start decreasing after 2011 and by 2031, seniors will comprise approximately one third of the Muskoka, Nipissing & Parry Sound population.¹¹

According to the 2001 Census of Canada Community Profiles, education levels in Nipissing District among the population aged 20-34 are close to the provincial averages, with some notable exceptions. While there is a higher percentage of those with trades certificates/diplomas (11.5% vs. 7.9%) and college certificates/diplomas (24.1% vs. 19.5%), the Nipissing District has a significantly lower number of university graduates as compared with the rest of the province (15.8% vs. 25.7%).¹²

3.4 Economic Profile and Trends

North Bay's economic profile includes the following characteristics, as identified in the City's Business Retention and Expansion Report (2005):

- The City serves a regional economic catchment area of 103,000 people with a strong public sector employment base.
- The diverse private sector thrives because of the community's strategic location at the intersection of two national fibre optics networks, intersection of two national rail lines, major highways 11 North and Trans Canada 17, and with air service supported by one of four 10,000 foot operational runways in Ontario.
- North Bay is home to 12 multinational companies with Canadian headquarters in the community, producing estimated revenues exceeding \$250 million annually, and providing highly engineered products and services to global markets.
- Being both a transportation and a telecommunications hub, North Bay projects growth in health, education, information communication technology, aviation, resource industries and light manufacturing sectors.¹³

According to LTAB's Labour Market Information and Research Unit, there are good employment prospects for Northern communities in the following areas:

- Health care sector (construction of a Regional Health Centre in North Bay and a new hospital facility in Mattawa)
- Construction
- Clerical
- Service industries
- Transportation

As identified in the North Bay Business Retention & Expansion Results conducted by the Mayor's Office of Economic Development in 2005, the majority of respondents of this survey noted concerns about the ageing work force and youth out-migration from the community. 47% mentioned that they had difficulties recruiting qualified employees.¹⁴ At the same time, 53% of respondents thought the number of employees in their business would increase. A need for employees with specialized skill sets such as millwrights, electricians, plumbers was identified, as well as engineers and pharmacists. One recommendation stemming from the North Bay Business Retention & Expansion survey was to foster and promote an immigrant-friendly community.¹⁵

4.0 Envisioning Solutions

4.1 The Immigration Rationale

In light of the current and projected demographic and economic challenges outlined in the previous section, the City of North Bay's Mayor's Office of Economic Development began proactively exploring solutions. Stemming from the research process, immigration was identified as a means of strengthening and enhancing the community, as one part of the solution.

Pursuing immigration from a growth standpoint is a quickly growing strategy throughout Canada, particularly in smaller and Northern centres. It is hard to ignore the Statistics Canada projections that by 2026, Canada's growth will be 100% dependent on immigration.¹⁶ In fact, between 1991 and 2001, immigration accounted for close to 70% of the net growth in the Canadian labour force.¹⁷ For smaller and Northern centres, this has even more significance as out-migration and ageing populations has placed eight communities in Northern Ontario on the list with the fastest declining population according to the latest Census data as mentioned in the previous section. As Canada begins to take stock of the looming demographic challenges, decision-makers in all levels of government are turning to immigration and developing policies, strategies, and partnerships to encourage newcomers to choose Canada and, in the case of some small and mid-sized centres, to choose specific locations. For an overview of immigration in Canada, including the framing policies and programs that have guided the development of this plan to date, please see Appendix 1 – Immigration in Canada.

Not only does immigration work as an economic growth strategy for its ability to reverse the trends of declining population, it is also attractive for its intake of skilled and professional trades. Canadian immigration policy prioritizes those candidates who will contribute to the economic health of the country and has comprehensive criteria in place to ensure the selection and admission of well-qualified individuals. Over 70% of newcomers to Ontario have some post-secondary education or training, meaning that those coming into the province are well situated to contribute to and create a thriving economic base.¹⁸ National policy makers continually take into consideration the labour market needs of the country and set yearly targets based on those needs. The largest numbers of immigrants enter Canada each year in the economic class, where the goal is to admit those individuals who can and will boost those occupations and sectors in decline. Investors and entrepreneurs are also targeted and selected for entry to Canada, ensuring the development of new and innovative markets.

Research has long documented the benefits of immigration on the Canadian economy. Not only do immigrants enhance the cultural and social fabric of our society, they increase local demand for goods and services, develop businesses

and create local jobs, and contribute to the overall economic health of a local community.

In addition, and of significance to the development of our local initiatives, the federal government is exploring options to encourage newcomers to move into centres other than Canada's three major centres, Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. In May 2001, the Strategic Policy, Planning and Research section of the federal department of Citizenship and Immigration published a special study titled "Towards a more balanced geographic distribution of immigrants".¹⁹ This preliminary document details historic and current trends in immigrant settlement and provides a framework for the development of provincial and municipal immigration strategies and policies. Encouraging Ontario's newcomers to settle in smaller cities, rural, and northern cities would help alleviate labour shortages, while also helping to reverse the trends of urbanization and depopulation. Although regionalization has not been officially adopted into Ontario's immigration policies as of yet, there is growing support, particularly as Toronto, which receives over half of Canada's newcomers, faces the possibility of reaching its absorptive capacity. The province of Quebec has formally incorporated regionalization policies although, to date, little is known of the effectiveness of these policies.²⁰

Many other provinces and municipalities have adopted immigration as part of their economic growth strategies. This is a growing trend nationally and is catching on in Northern Ontario. As such, there is increasing competition for federal and provincial funding and programming as other centres recognize the importance of attracting and retaining immigrants. Many Northern municipalities are already in demographic and economic crisis and immigration provides a viable, albeit partial, solution. Therefore it is important that we learn from those who have successfully incorporated immigration into their growth and economic strategies. We should also work together to build Northern Ontario into a thriving economic region.

In preparation of North Bay's immigration-related activities and in the development of this document, much research was done on other centres which have already adopted similar strategies for immigration. Several key players were identified and much can be modeled after these success stories. In particular, Manitoba and Quebec have been identified for our purposes as leaders on the use of immigration for economic and population growth. As well, the Province of Nova Scotia has been actively working to develop its own strategies. These provinces, along with their respective municipalities, are identified and their strategies are outlined in Appendix 2 – Best Practices.

In light of the successful implementation of these immigration strategies in their respective towns, cities, and provinces, and the many potential benefits of encouraging immigration to the city, the City of North Bay's Mayor's Office of

Economic Development recognized the great value in prioritizing immigration. With that in mind, the North Bay Newcomer Network was created.

4.2 North Bay Newcomer Network

The North Bay Newcomer Network (NNN) is an immigration committee led by the City of North Bay. It consists of representatives from the private and public sectors as well as from all three levels of government and their agencies, non-profit organizations, service clubs, and the education sector. The initial, overall objective of this committee has been to develop strategies that will result in the attraction and retention of more immigrants to the community.

The North Bay Newcomer Network has always considered community participation and collaboration between governments and communities to be key to the development of a comprehensive immigration strategy. In April 2006, NNN hosted an Immigration Strategy Symposium to explore ideas for attracting and retaining new immigrants to the area, identify gaps and needs in service delivery, and to gauge the community response to this initial suggestion. With representation from local immigrants, businesses, service providers, and other community members, the symposium generated many recommendations. There was an overwhelming acknowledgement that the settlement and integration of newcomers must be a top priority of any proposed immigration strategy.

Since the public consultation, the North Bay Newcomer Network has been increasingly productive in terms of planning for an effective immigration strategy.

Action	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarization tour with business immigrants from Toronto 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising the awareness of economic opportunity in North Bay
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and implementation of a year long research project to analyse the current immigration demographics and identify needs in North Bay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of who is already here • Development of cultural & ethnic networks • Identifying the gaps and needs from immigrant perspective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of an adult ESL program in North Bay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yearly increases in enrolment by immigrants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations delivered to several key government departments & ministries, including Citizenship & Immigration Canada (CIC) and the Ministry of Economic Development & Trade. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government becomes aware of local need. • CIC issues three separate calls for proposals for service delivery in North Bay.

- Working partnerships developed with other immigration projects in Northern Ontario centres, including Sudbury and Thunder Bay.
- Effective media engagement, resulting in several very positive portrayals of local immigrants and immigration in local media.
- Hiring of a Diversity Outreach Coordinator through the Ontario Community Builders program.
- Coordination with City's Canada Day committee to include a multicultural theme.
- Proposals submitted for the delivery of settlement programming in North Bay (ISAP, Host, LINC).
- Implementation of a diversity awareness program, including visits to local high school and university classes, and community cultural events.
- Building community networks and engaging established immigrant, cultural, ethnic, and religious organizations.
- City had exhibition booth at conference for Internationally Educated Professionals in Toronto.
- Sharing of resources and best practices for successful immigration projects.
- Raising community awareness and fostering cross-cultural respect.
- Development of targeted education and awareness programs.
- Raising community awareness, fostering cross cultural respect, engaging cultural communities.
- Upon approval, immigrants will have access to settlement & support programs. The programs will also enable the City to gain knowledge on numbers, skills and other characteristics of immigrants to the community.
- Raising community awareness, fostering cross-cultural respect, cultivating a welcoming community.
- Strong referral network created
- Raising visibility of ethnic communities
- Gaining support for immigration initiative
- Increase awareness about North Bay among the immigrant community and present the City as an alternative to Toronto.

Significant emphasis has been placed on building community support, fostering relationships, and increasing the visibility of culture in the area. In addition, the North Bay Newcomer Network has been gaining recognition in the wider community and has received much positive feedback. New partnerships have developed with key organizations.

4.3 NNN Partners as of October 2007

Group	Role
Canadore College	Offers more than 75 full-time postsecondary programs. Has developed foreign student attraction and retention program and is now hosting a number of international students. Canadore College offers international student services.
City of North Bay	Lead organization for the immigration project.
District of Nipissing Social Services Administration Board	Provides information on various assistance programs, housing, day care subsidies and medical services in the area.
Local Training and Adjustment Board (LTAB)	Will launch a major two-year labour analysis and development initiative to help address skill shortages for employers in the region. Will be instrumental in identifying immigrant target groups for future recruitment, based on workforce trends.
Ministry of Citizenship & Immigration	Provide updates on government programs and services related to immigration. Offer advice and contacts.
Ministry of Northern Development and Mines	Provide updates on government programs and services related to immigration. Offer advice and contacts.
Near North District School Board	Offers English as a Second Language and Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada classes through a partnership with Young People's Press/ North Bay & District Multicultural Centre.
Nipissing University	Has a foreign student marketing program aimed at attracting and retaining foreign students. Hosts a number of international students to whom they offer international student services.
North Bay Literacy Council	Assists adult immigrants who need help with reading, writing, spelling, math or computers. The primary program designed for this group is English as a Second Language, which the North Bay Literacy Council will provide in small group sessions.
Rotary Club of Nipissing	Service organization with an integral international component. Supports the immigration project and the fact that it will bring diversity, new talents and business opportunities to the community.
Salvation Army	Non-governmental provider of social services. Will help families in need, as newcomers sometimes are, with clothing, meal programs, etc. Volunteer opportunities within the Salvation Army.
The Business Centre Nipissing Parry Sound	Can provide support to immigrants who want to start their own business. The Centre offers easy access to business consulting services and information concerning market research, business

	planning, management, marketing, technology and financing.
The North Bay & District Chamber of Commerce	Organizes monthly business and networking opportunities, where immigrants can meet the local business community. The Chamber offers programs, seminars, and referral services for Chamber members. Partner of the Gettrainedworkers-initiative, linking employers with trained workers.
Volunteer Centre of the Blue Sky Region	Can help newcomers get involved as volunteers, which will facilitate their integration into the community. The Volunteer Centre will be an instrumental source for recruitment to the HOST program, once this program is in place in the city. NNN can support the Volunteer Centre by helping get more available volunteers.
Yes! Employment Services	Yes! Employment Services can assist immigrants with all their employment needs: introduction to the Canadian workplace, resumes, pre-employment training, interview skills, job placement, job support, referrals to literacy partners. Plans to offer JSW services for newcomers (Job Search Workshops) in partnership with Young People's Press/ North Bay & District Multicultural Centre.
Young People's Press	Intends to rebrand itself as the North Bay & District Multicultural Centre to address the changing needs of the community. Pending funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, hopes to do the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer ISAP —Immigrant Settlement & Adaptation Program; one-on-one assistance to newcomers for housing, education, medical services, shopping, banking, transit, etc. • Offer JSW services for newcomers (Job Search Workshops) in partnership with Yes! Employment Services • Offer NIC (Newcomer Information Centre) self-help services for newcomers • Offer LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) services through a partnership with the Near North District School Board's ESL class • Offer a HOST program, whereby Canadian citizens partner with an immigrant to mentor them through their first few months. We will work with the Volunteer Centre to attract and screen volunteers.

The North Bay Newcomer Network aims to include new community partners in the near future in order to ensure representation of relevant community groups on the Committee.

5.0 Environmental Scan

Prior to the implementation of any new initiative, it is important to minimize any identified weakness or threats, and build on the strengths and opportunities available. In order to do that, a SWOT analysis was conducted on North Bay to identify which areas of concern may present difficulty in the application of the Immigration plan. It was also important that we capitalize on our strengths and the many opportunities available.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Geographic location; accessibility to major centres in both southern and eastern Ontario. -Diversified mix of multinational companies and local small – medium sized companies -Quality of life / Door-step access to nature / Good recreational opportunities -Positive media response to immigration -Accessible and concerned public leaders -Nipissing University & Canadore College, strong international marketing -Investment incentives -Established immigration committee -Growing networks between immigrant and cultural groups and those initiating the immigration initiatives - Extensive contact network including other communities with immigration initiatives, provincial and federal government organizations. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of support resources for immigrants -Hidden ethnic, religious, and cultural groups -Lack of expertise in immigration issues, including lawyers, consultants, and immigration officials -No visible cultural infrastructure, including grocery stores, religious gathering places -Little international profile -Low incidence of visible minorities
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Launch of the pilot PNP program -Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement, with an additional \$920 million for settlement services. Northern and smaller centres are a priority of the COIA -Roll out of immigration portals to municipalities in Ontario -Two-year track record of successful immigration-related activities in the community, bring immigration to the forefront of community interest -Immigration is a growing priority for economic development nationally and provincially -Regionalization of immigration becoming a priority as issues arise surrounding the absorptive capabilities of the country's largest centres -Metropolis Project focus on rural immigration -Ontario's Northern Prosperity Plan, with the GO NORTH initiative. 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of resources for newcomers -External and internal perception that no economic opportunity in Northern Ontario -Inability to achieve community consensus on value of immigration -Sudbury has a larger critical mass of ethnic diversity and is further advanced in the immigration strategy process.

The SWOT analysis presented here highlights just how timely the development of this Immigration plan is for North Bay. With the ever-increasing focus on the regionalization of immigration in Canada, coupled with the commitment of the province to support and develop Northern Ontario, North Bay is situated perfectly to tap into these trends. Our focus must now be on reducing our identified weaknesses and minimizing possible threats, while taking full advantage of our strengths and using the many opportunities to develop our immigration initiative.

6.0 Priorities, Outcomes, & Actions

In consideration of the development of this strategic immigration plan, we have identified the following three priorities: Attraction, Settlement & Retention, and building a Welcoming Community. This plan is primarily a business strategy designed to enhance economic viability of the area by attracting business immigrants. However, we recognize the significance of our actions on the ethnic makeup of the community and the lives of the individuals that we attract for settlement. Therefore, we are also prioritizing the social aspects of this plan, including building a prepared and welcoming city.

The involvement of stakeholders at the community level is central to the development and implementation of this plan. We also recognize the importance of community support to the success of this initiative. To date, we have paid considerable attention to building support and involving community partners in the development of this immigration plan. The North Bay Newcomer Network is a direct result of this support-building and represents significant community interest in this project.

It is our intention to continue to involve our community partners in the implementation of this plan. We have identified eleven key stakeholder groups that we believe must be supportive of this immigration plan in order for it to be effective and successful in our community: established immigrant groups, economic development agencies, religious organizations, municipal government and city council, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, employers, education sector including university and college, Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, social services agencies, and the settlement sector. The majority of these stakeholders are already actively involved in this project. However, several have yet to come to the table. We will work to bring all identified stakeholders into this ongoing dialogue in order to best prepare North Bay for the implementation of this plan.

As mentioned, our key goals are the attraction, settlement and retention of immigrants, and building a welcoming community. Outlined in the following pages are our reasons and strategies for achieving these goals.

Attraction

The attraction of immigrants to the North Bay area is a challenging one since new immigrants are much more likely to settle in large urban centres with accessible resources (such as settlement services) and established cultural and language groups. The large majority, over 70%, of new immigrants choose to settle in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver.²¹ Ontario takes in more than half of new immigrants to the country, which presents considerable possibilities for the development of inter-provincial immigrant attraction plans. There is great potential for the City of North Bay to tap into the wealth of resources that immigrants bring to Canada; however this calls for a strategic attraction plan which will include addressing misconceptions of Northern Ontario, targeting specific immigrant groups, and ensuring economic opportunity for those who choose to move here.

Goal(s):

- To target and attract immigrants who are most likely to settle in the North Bay area. This will not only grow the population base, but will encourage economic growth, resulting in a viable and dynamic economy.

Strategies:

- Work with other Northern Ontario centres to enhance the national and international profile of the region
- Develop partnerships with other Northern Ontario centres to jointly market Northern Ontario as an immigrant destination.
- Develop a comprehensive municipal immigration website through the assistance of the federal and provincial government's funding agreement to create municipal web portals.
- Inform local employers about the pilot PNP program and emphasize the benefits of using this program.
- Compile up-to-date information on local businesses for sale and market investment and business opportunities in Toronto.
- Create a marketing package designed specifically for immigrations; highlight the benefits of North Bay that matter to immigrants (the zero wait time for language classes, low crime rate, established cultural groups, unique location for business, proximity to Ottawa and Toronto, airport, availability of land, etc).
- Work with employers to identify worker shortages; encourage employers and assist them to recruit foreign trained individuals from

Toronto, other provincial centres and from abroad, possibly using ethnic media to advertise.

- Stay alert for provincial opportunities to market North Bay, such as the Internationally Educated Professionals conference, MEDT networking opportunities, other job fairs, etc.
- Organize and conduct familiarization (Fam) tours with interested investors and business immigrants to promote the area.
- Work with Nipissing International to market North Bay overseas on their regular recruitment missions
- Hold sessions with international students to outline their options for staying in North Bay upon graduation; encourage them to apply for temporary resident visas and permanent residency.
- Research the Regional Newcomer Employment Networks (RNENs) for potential benefits in Northern Ontario; possibly work with other centres to develop a Northern network.
- Encourage overseas immigrant entrepreneurs to apply through CIC's Entrepreneur Program and establish businesses in the area.

Integration & Retention

It is crucial that the resources be in place to support the attraction of immigrants. The integration process is often very confusing, frustrating, and difficult. In the context of North Bay, this process is compounded by the lack of available resources, including cultural, religious, social, and economic resources. Without facilitating the settlement of newcomers into the community, integration and retention become increasingly difficult. Newcomers are less likely to stay in North Bay if they can not access appropriate services, such as English language training, employment training, referral to community resources, etc. Research has shown that newly-arrived immigrants are highly mobile in their first years in Canada, and will opt to move to a large city if they cannot quickly connect to the host community.²² Of particular importance in the decision to stay or leave a certain centre is the notion of "critical mass", which refers to the number of people from the same country or background.²³ The visibility and ease of finding and associating with other members of the same origin is a significant factor in immigrant settlement and one that must be prioritized in our local efforts. In order to develop a comprehensive immigration plan with the overall objective of creating sustainable economic growth, it is crucial that significant emphasis be placed on the integration, settlement, and retention of immigrants.

Goal(s):

- To effectively and continually assist in the integration and settlement of immigrants in the North Bay area
- To retain those immigrants who are already here and those who arrive later
- To develop community support for the project

Strategies:

- Actively encourage and support local stakeholders to pursue federal and provincial funding for delivery of settlement and language services (including LINC, ISAP, Host, ELT, and NSP).
- Continue to work with federal and provincial funders to ask for their support of settlement services in this area.
- Use every opportunity to promote the work of the North Bay Newcomer Network to both CIC and MCI, along with our federal and provincial representatives.
- Work with community partners to establish innovative and coordinated ways to deliver settlement services.
- Organize and promote regular multicultural events, such as cultural entertainment at the annual Canada Day celebrations.
- Encourage and promote other local cultural initiatives, such as Nipissing University's International Food Festival and the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination project, celebrating its 20th year in 2008.
- Identify key people in each cultural, ethnic, immigrant, and religious group and create a publicly accessible information-sharing and referral network.
- Work with established immigrant communities to create a visible presence and profile in the community.
- Analyze the data from the year-long research study and needs analysis to identify the key areas of concern for newcomers and develop appropriate strategies to address those issues.
- Develop a welcome package for newcomers, listing community contacts and resources. Ensure this package is available at all key areas, including the Human Resources departments at major employers.
- Identify key individuals who are well-versed in immigration issues and community resources; ensure all crucial points of contact are aware of these individuals for referral purposes.
- Develop a comprehensive communication network so that new service or event information relating to immigration/cultural matters is quickly disseminated to all relevant front line agencies and workers.
- Encourage local schools to welcome newcomer families and work with the children to overcome barriers to their active participation.
- Maintain contact with local employers for updates on immigrant programs and services in the community.

Welcoming Community

In addition to the importance of the attraction, integration, and retention of immigrants, it is equally important to develop a community that recognizes the importance of immigration and that welcomes newcomers as residents and participants in the development of a thriving community. Integration is a two-way street, requiring active participation from the host centre. Research has shown that community attitudes towards immigration have direct and strong influence on whether an immigration plan will be successful.²⁴ Municipalities, therefore, play an important role in educating its community members and fostering respect for immigration and diversity. Without this component, newcomers will often feel unwelcome and find it very difficult to settle permanently into a community. Therefore, it is important that priority be given to building a community that offers newcomers full opportunities to contribute their skills and resources and one that is ready and willing to adapt to the changes that occur with the inclusion of newcomers.

Goal(s):

- To develop an inclusive and welcoming community; one that respects the cultural traditions of local immigrant groups, understands and values the contributions of immigrants in the community.
- To foster understanding and support for the immigration initiative.

Strategic Action:

Our strategic action in this area falls under two priorities: 1) Fostering respect & celebration of diversity and 2) Awareness building and education.

Fostering Respect and Celebration of Diversity

- Work with the City of North Bay's Parks and Recreation Department to incorporate a multicultural component into the annual Canada Day celebrations.
- Host a reaffirmation of Canadian Citizenship ceremony on an annual basis.
- Promote media coverage of citizenship ceremonies.
- Assist Young People's Press, the four school boards, Canadore College and Nipissing University in promoting the 20th anniversary and subsequent annual celebrations surrounding the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, including the Evening of Applause, Human Rights Hall of Fame, Students Who Make a Difference and anti-racism poster and mixed media contest.
- Encourage and assist established cultural communities to set up visible social groups and/or gatherings.
- Encourage the media to cover cultural events and highlight the accomplishments of local immigrants.

- Create partnerships with Nipissing University and the local schools to have international students interact with the high school students and share information about their home cultures.

Awareness Building and Education

- Ensure that employers are aware of the benefits of immigration; hold awareness sessions with employers and Human Resource associations.
- Ensure employers are aware of the community supports available for their foreign workers and families.
- Work within the schools to deliver cross-cultural workshops, such as BaFa BaFa.
- Encourage elected officials to keep immigration and its benefits on their agendas.
- Work with municipal government departments, in particular those doing front line work, to deliver diversity awareness and sensitivity training to their employees.
- Encourage the media to portray immigration in positive lights and to minimize and/or omit stories that put a negative spin on immigration.

7.0 Conclusion

Immigration has been identified as a priority measure to tackle North Bay's population challenges and need for skilled workers. For that purpose, the North Bay Newcomer Network was created. The overall goal of this immigration committee has been to develop and implement strategies that will result in the attraction, integration and retention of immigrants to North Bay. Equal importance has been given to activities that will foster a welcoming community, such as awareness and education initiatives, and events that celebrate diversity.

This Immigration plan was designed after a thorough SWOT analysis addressing North Bay's specific situation. The plan identifies partners and suggests a wide range of measures and activities to achieve the overall objectives. It is emphasized that the success of the project to a large extent hinges on the active and continued involvement of community partners.

The next step in North Bay's immigration project is to hold stakeholder consultations in the next year, in order to address questions such as:

- Community's target number of immigrant arrivals in the next 5, 10 and 15 years
- Action plan based on required time for the immigration application process to be completed

- Evaluation and review of settlement and retention initiatives
- Can we describe the profile of the immigrant that would settle most quickly and successfully here?
- How do we recruit?
- What countries should we target?

8.0 Contact

Mayor's Office of Economic Development
Corporation of the City of North Bay
200 McIntyre St. East
North Bay, ON Canada
P1B 8H8

Telephone: (705) 474-0400
Toll Free: (800) 465-1882
Fax: (705) 474-4493
moed@cityofnorthbay.ca
www.cityofnorthbay.ca

Appendix 1:

Immigration in Canada

In Canada, immigration has long been on the agenda of national interest. Over the last ten years, Canada has accepted, on average, 200,000 immigrants per year. The law which guides all immigration in Canada is the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), which came into effect in June 2002, replacing the Immigration Act of 1976.²⁵ The Canadian Constitution places joint responsibility for immigration to Canada between the federal and provincial governments. Increasingly, provincial and municipal governments are prioritizing immigration as a response to population decline and projected labour shortages. The federal government, which sets immigration guidelines and manages the inflow of newcomers, has responded by negotiating separate immigration agreements between Canada and the provinces tailored to meet specific provincial objectives, including the limited selection of immigrants.

Citizenship & Immigration Canada (CIC)

The Department of Citizenship & Immigration Canada (CIC) is the federal department responsible for all immigration-related matters in Canada. Established in 1994, CIC's mission is to 1) develop and implement immigration policies, programs, and services, and 2) advance global migration policies in a manner that supports Canada's objectives.²⁶ CIC is also responsible for setting the yearly immigration targets for Canada and for processing visa applications (permanent and temporary), refugee claims, and citizenship applications. The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) also plays a crucial role in the admittance of immigrants to Canada, via port-of-entry enforcement.

Along with setting federal legislation and national policies on immigration, Citizenship & Immigration Canada is also invested in the effective settlement of newcomers to the country. Settlement and integration programs are integral to the immigration process and central to the national immigration program, making the development and implementation of this type of programming a priority. Currently, CIC offers several programs and services to facilitate the settlement process.²⁷

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) – The federal government offers a basic language training program, at no cost, to eligible newcomers. This program is delivered in partnership with local school boards, community groups, immigrant-serving agencies, and others to assist newcomers in acquiring English or French language proficiency.

Enhanced Language Training Initiative (ELT) – Many internationally trained professionals, while proficient in basic English, lack the advanced

English required for many professions. ELT provides a higher level of English training, including sector and job specific language.

Immigrant Settlement & Adaptation Program (ISAP) – This CIC-funded program delivers direct settlement services to newcomers to encourage their full social, cultural, economic, and political integration in Canadian society. The goal is to assist newcomers to become participating members in Canadian society as quickly as possible. Direct services include such things as help finding housing, referral to community resources, community orientations, job search workshops and employment counselling, and assistance with immigration forms.²⁸

Host – Mentorship has often been cited as key to the integration of newcomers in a community. The Host program matches newcomers to community members who volunteer to assist the newcomer in navigating their new community. This provides a valuable first connection to the community and helps the newcomer feel more at ease in their surroundings.

Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO) – Early in 2007, the Government of Canada launched the first phase of a new initiative called the Foreign Credentials Referral Office. Although not considered as part of settlement services, this program is designed to help foreign trained professionals get their credentials assessed and recognized more quickly in the Canadian system. This office provides in-person, phone, and online support and referral through the Service Canada locations and was designed as a complement to the Canadian government's Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) Program.

Ontario Ministry of Citizenship & Immigration (MCI)

The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship & Immigration (MCI) is the provincial body responsible for immigration and citizenship issues within the province of Ontario. While the federal government has final authority on the development of immigration policies, the IRPA established a consultation process whereby the provinces may be given input into the development of policies and programs in order to take into consideration the effect those policies and programs may have on the provinces.²⁹ Canada is also required to consult with the provinces before determining the number of immigrants to be permitted in a year. Therefore, the Province of Ontario, as the primary immigrant-receiving province in Canada, does have significant involvement in policy development and setting immigration projections.

However, the primary responsibility of the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration in terms of immigration is the welcoming and settlement of

newcomers in the province. Ontario takes in more than half of all immigrants to Canada and as such, has invested considerable time and money (over \$146 million annually) to develop and deliver the resources necessary to successfully accommodate these newcomers, including settlement services, language training, and labour-market integration programs.

Newcomer Settlement Program (NSP) – This provincial program provides funding to community non-profit groups to deliver direct settlement services to newcomers, focusing on improving the quality and accessibility of settlement programming. Services offered include needs assessments, referral, community orientation, settlement assistance.

Language Interpreter Services – The focus of this program is victims of domestic violence who have language barriers. The goal is to provide interpreter services to enable access to legal, healthcare, and social services. Funded service-providing organizations deliver service 24 hours a day in over 60 different languages.

Ontario's Community Builders – This program was developed to encourage community projects that are focused on celebrating multiculturalism, promoting diversity, and raising the awareness of Ontario's cultural makeup. Although not a settlement program, this initiative allows for the creation of community-based projects that contribute to the development of welcoming and multicultural communities, encouraging the active participation of various cultural, ethnic, and immigrant groups.

Pilot Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) – As an employer-driven nomination program, the PNP is designed to facilitate the attraction and retention of new investors and foreign professionals to Ontario. The PNP allows employers to choose prospective employees, who will then be nominated by the province for permanent residence and fast-tracked through the federal immigration process by CIC. The goal of this program is to fill current labour-market needs in the province and stimulate economic growth. The pilot PNP is the result of an immigration agreement between Canada and Ontario.

Municipal Immigration Portals – As part of the Canada – Ontario Immigration Agreement, the Province of Ontario is in the process of funding municipal immigration portals that will provide direct information to newcomers on services available in Ontario's cities and towns. These internet sites will not only provide important pre- and post-arrival information to newcomers, but they will enhance the visibility of smaller and northern centres in the international community. Municipal immigration portals will be linked directly to the Ontario Immigration Portal

(ontarioimmigration.ca), and indirectly to the Canada Immigration Portal (goingtocanada.gc.ca).

Canada – Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA)

The Canada – Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA) was signed in November 2005, and represents significant federal-provincial collaboration on immigration. Under the terms of this agreement, Canada will invest an additional \$920 million over the next five years for settlement and language training in the province. Prior to this agreement, Canada provided approximately \$108 million per year for settlement programming.³⁰ This increases the total federal investment in Ontario’s settlement sector to \$1.3 billion over the next five years. The development of a *Strategic Plan for Settlement and Language Training* was identified as a priority of this agreement.³¹

The COIA formally sets out how the federal and provincial governments will address immigration cooperatively in order to “optimize the economic benefits of immigration and ensure that immigration policies and programs respond to Ontario’s social, economic development and labour market priorities”.³² The Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement is a comprehensive agreement that outlines several priorities, including the coordination of settlement and language services, collaborative immigration portals, and shared attraction and recruitment techniques.

Of particular significance, the COIA sets an important precedent in its commitment to municipal partnerships (Annex F). This is the first time that all three levels of government will formally cooperate on issues of immigration, a considerable achievement for municipalities wanting to advance their own interests regarding immigration. In a Northern Ontario context, this negotiation and agreement to involve municipalities in dialogues pertaining to immigration is rather noteworthy considering the priority given to rural and northern interests. This annex commits to exploring northern stakes in immigration attraction and retention, recognizing the economic importance of these interests. Agreeing also to develop innovative strategies for the delivery of settlement and language services in the North, this annex commits Canada and Ontario to work towards the success of municipal immigration strategies, with a particular focus on Northern and rural communities.

Appendix 2:

Best Practices

Manitoba – “Growing Through Immigration”³³

Nationally, Manitoba is recognized as a leader in immigration strategies and serves as an excellent example of best practices in using immigration as an economic growth strategy. In 1996, Manitoba became the first province other than Quebec to develop an agreement with the federal government on immigration, the Canada Manitoba Immigration Agreement (CMIA). The province was also the first to develop a provincial nominee program (PNP), which quickly became the central tool in their immigration strategy.

In 2007, Manitoba’s immigration rate was the highest per capita in Canada, surging ahead of the all-time leader, Ontario.³⁴ The province had set a goal of welcoming 10,000 new immigrants yearly and in 2007, Manitoba has already welcomed 10,800 newcomers. As well, due to an increase in retention rates, the province saw a .7% overall growth rate, the highest in over twenty years.

Of even greater significance is the 2006 census data that has recently been released by Statistics Canada. The Stats Can report lists two of Manitoba’s communities as having the fastest population growth of small towns and rural communities. These two areas are Stanley and Steinbach which experienced a 24.3% and 19.9% increase respectively.³⁵

Manitoba has been actively involved in promoting rural immigration, engaging municipal leaders in some of its smallest towns to utilize the available federal and provincial programs to their advantage. Of note are the towns of Winkler and Steinbach, both located in southeast Manitoba. The “Winkler Initiative” was a result of the provincial government working actively with and on behalf of the town.³⁶ The community of Winkler (pop. 8500) quickly came together in recognition of the benefits of immigration and responded early to the settlement and integration needs of newcomers. The Manitoba provincial nominee program was the key generator of growth in the small town as employers learned to use the program effectively. Between 1999 and 2006, Winkler welcomed 3,325 new immigrants, a significant number considering the size of the area.³⁷

Steinbach, a city of approximately 9000, has also tapped into the immigration initiative successfully. The local immigration project was largely employer-driven, as employers searched for a way to attract workers. The newly developed PNP program provided that solution. Working closely with the provincial government, Steinbach used the PNP to bring in many new immigrants and the latest data reports show over 2000 newcomers to Steinbach between 1999 and 2006.³⁸

This trend is growing across Manitoba as small and rural communities recognize the economic potential in receiving immigrants. In particular, the success of Manitoba's immigration initiatives contributed to the development of strong partnerships at the community level and with the provincial government to effectively put the PNP to use. Collaboration was, and continues to be essential in the planning and implementation of Manitoba's immigration strategies. Also key in their success is the focus on strong settlement and language services, delivered at the ground level through provincial programming. Earlier this summer, the province also introduced a new strategy for settlement services, designed to strengthen the province's ability to attract and retain newcomers.³⁹ Sponsorship also plays a large role in the high numbers of immigrants being welcomed into the province.

Overall, the province of Manitoba serves as an excellent example of effective preparation and implementation in the development of their immigration strategies. A case-by-case study of the small rural towns located throughout the province demonstrates the applicability of incorporating immigration into an economic growth plan and emphasizes the need to utilize the programs available (PNP) to reach growth targets. The province has recently introduced an online service to assist other centres in the development of effective immigration strategies and can be accessed via the Government of Manitoba website.⁴⁰ Citing widespread community and provincial support and collaboration as the key to success, Manitoba is continuing to lead the way for other provinces and communities.

Best Practices: Quebec

The province of Quebec has long been recognized for its aggressive immigration policies. The first province in Canada to negotiate a federal-provincial agreement on immigration, Quebec has led the way for other provinces to do the same. The Canada-Quebec Accord is among the most comprehensive immigration agreement to date and places sole responsibility on the province for the settlement and integration of its newcomers. Quebec has also formally adopted regionalization policies as a way to encourage newcomers to move away from its largest city, Montreal.

In 2005, Quebec welcomed over 43,000 foreign skilled workers through its well established and determined attraction and recruitment strategies.⁴¹ The province has long been working on unique methods of immigrant attraction, using federal relations and new technologies to advance provincial interests. As the vast majority of newcomers (88%) to the province are destined for, and concentrated in Montreal, the provincial government has had to develop innovative policies to encourage not only newcomers to move outside Montreal, but other Quebec

towns to develop attraction strategies. The province is working actively with its municipalities to build marketing and attraction strategies through agreements between the province's municipalities and the ministere de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles (MICC), the government body responsible for immigration affairs in Quebec.

The cities of Sherbrooke, Quebec City, and Gatineau have been the primary targets of the Government of Quebec's regionalization policies. Recently, the city of Sherbrooke forged ahead of its counterparts when the city adopted a formal immigrant welcome and integration policy.⁴² Sherbrooke has long been a provincial leader in terms of immigration, adopting a community action policy on immigration in 1996 and actively supporting those agencies involved in the settlement of the city's newcomers.⁴³ However, the implementation of a municipal policy on immigrant welcome and integration provides a formal framework for municipal action on immigration. Although it is too early to review the success or failure of this policy, the City of Sherbrooke most definitely provides a starting point for studying the importance of establishing a welcoming community and developing the support infrastructure needed to retain new immigrants.

In 2001, Quebec City signed an agreement with MICC to develop the city as an immigrant destination. From that agreement, Quebec City created the Commissariat aux relations internationales (CRI) to actively market the city internationally.⁴⁴ To date, this is the only such body in the province and although it is still early to determine the effectiveness of this initiative, Quebec City has been enjoying a heightened international profile and recently won an international achievement award in recognition of the city's efforts.⁴⁵

The Province of Quebec considers the regionalization of immigration to be a major priority. The MICC began developing regional action plans in 2004 and works very closely with municipalities as they develop their own grassroots initiatives for immigrant attraction and retention. The MICC assists local groups and agencies through funding projects designed to encourage immigrants to move to outlying areas.⁴⁶ Overall, the Quebec experience has been one to take note of, as the province is slowly but successfully attracting newcomers to its smaller and rural communities. What stands out from the Quebec model is the level of participation between the province and its municipalities, and the widespread consensus that immigration is beneficial to the Quebec economy.

Other Centres

There are many other centres across Canada that have developed and implemented, or are in the process of implementing comprehensive immigration strategies. The Atlantic provinces, for example, have spent considerable time

researching and consulting with local stakeholders in the development of their separate strategies. The Province of Nova Scotia has a provincial immigration strategy and several towns and regions in the province have also adopted strategies, including the Halifax Region and Cape Breton.⁴⁷ The Province of Newfoundland has also invested in the development of a strategy for immigrant attraction and retention.⁴⁸ Across the western half of the country, immigration is also a top priority, particularly in the Prairie provinces.⁴⁹

It is hard to ignore the growing economic development strategies that are including immigration as a significant method for building the population and local economies. Across Ontario, 2nd and 3rd tier cities are vying for their spot in the immigration trend, including Guelph, London, and Waterloo. Northern Ontario is quickly catching up as Greater Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Timmins, and Sault Ste. Marie write immigration into their municipal growth strategies.⁵⁰ It is important in development of our own local initiatives to take into consideration the work of others and learn from the experiences of those who have been successful.

We must also remain aware of the provincial and federal initiatives and programs to support the geographic dispersion of newcomers across the province. As the regionalization of immigrants reaches the top of the federal and provincial agenda, it is important that the City of North Bay take advantage of those interests to promote the city as an immigrant destination.

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