
SUMA Position Statement

In 2011, the top ten destinations for newcomers to settle in Saskatchewan were all urban centres, with Saskatoon and Regina leading the province. Many towns and villages are also seeing this trend; immigrants are moving to towns and villages, starting new businesses, and creating diverse urban communities all across Saskatchewan.

Urban governments play a front-line role in newcomer settlement, but have not yet been given the opportunity to submit formal input into the development of immigration policies and program alongside of the federal and provincial government. As Saskatchewan's economy continues to grow, Saskatchewan can expect more newcomers settling in urban centres. This new trend needs a new partnership among all orders of government to ensure newcomers have the services they need to settle and prosper in Saskatchewan.

Key Messages

- Immigration policy must function as a partnership among the federal, provincial, and urban governments. Urban governments play an important on-the-ground role in immigrant settlement and therefore must be part of the policy process.
- This new partnership is needed because newcomers often use services directly or indirectly provided by urban governments. Some common examples:
 - Higher demand for transit
 - Different needs for recreation and leisure programs
 - Unable to find appropriate and affordable housing choices
 - Insufficient language skills can become a barrier for newcomers to access services. For example, municipal police require translators to communicate with new residents and ensure that newcomers understand the role of police officers and justice system.
- A common challenge for urban governments is that they are not adequately equipped to communicate with newcomers and inform them about the services they provide. This can be a barrier to successful settlement.
- SUMA wants to work with Citizenship and Immigration Canada on promoting Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) in Saskatchewan. LIPs are an excellent tool for urban governments to work with regional gateways and other stakeholders in their communities to create a welcoming and inclusive environment.

Current Status

In October 2012, the Government of Saskatchewan released the *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth*. The plan sets the target of 1.2 million people living in Saskatchewan by 2020. Immigration will play a large role in achieving this goal and the provincial government seeks to increase the cap on provincial immigrant nominees from 4,000 to 6,000. The goals of the Plan for Growth ensure that Saskatchewan will continue to see increases in newcomers, making successful immigrant settlement all the more important.

Newcomers have consistently gravitated towards urban communities. The growth of Saskatchewan urban communities is exciting, but it also comes with challenges that must be addressed.

Background

Saskatchewan's demographics are changing as the province has an influx of immigrants. Since 2007, 32,000 immigrants have settled throughout 330 Saskatchewan communities. Nominations through the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP) have jumped by 140 per cent since 2007-08.

Since 2009, Saskatchewan has seen one of the largest increases in immigrant landings in Canada, at a 30 per cent increase. In 2011, 3.6 per cent of Canadian newcomers settled in Saskatchewan. This makes Saskatchewan the sixth most popular jurisdiction for newcomers. Given the province's emphasis on immigration attraction and settlement in the *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth*, it is likely that these numbers will continue to increase.

Changing demographics in Saskatchewan comes with changing demands for new services and putting pressure on existing services. Newcomers often use many services provided directly and indirectly by urban governments. For example, new immigrants commute via public transit more than twice as much as Canadian-born residents do. Yet, very few Saskatchewan communities have efficient – if any – public transit. This can severely inhibit newcomers' access to education, work, and social and leisure opportunities.

Appropriate housing is a vital component of successful immigrant settlement, but with many communities across Saskatchewan already facing housing affordability and availability issues. Newcomers have a tough time finding the suitable housing options. The provincial and urban governments must work together to explore more affordable housing solution. Changing demographics mean changing programs to meet the needs of newcomers; a noticeable example is newcomers' enjoy different recreation and leisure programs. By adjusting programs that suit the needs, recreation and leisure activities can be a great way for newcomers to settle in their new communities.

Strategic Context

Immigrants are overwhelmingly choosing to settle in urban communities and therefore, urban governments need to be a partner in developing immigration policies and programs. Successful newcomer settlement relies on urban governments' ability to provide basic services successfully, and adapting to the changing demand that comes with changing demographics.

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