



LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP

STRATEGIC ROADMAP

LANARK & RENFREW COUNTY

(2025-2028)

THIS STRATEGIC ROADMAP IS DESIGNED PROVIDE AN EVIDENCE-INFORMED ROADMAP FOR STRENGTHENING NEWCOMER ATTRACTION, INCLUSION, AND LONG-TERM RETENTION ACROSS LANARK AND RENFREW COUNTIES.

Land Acknowledgement and Commitment to Reconciliation

The work of the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) - Lanark & Renfrew, established in 2011 to create welcoming communities for newcomers and immigrants, takes place on the unceded and unsurrendered traditional territory of the Algonquin Peoples. We acknowledge the deep and enduring connection that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples have to this land, and we honour the traditional stewards who have cared for Turtle Island (Canada) since time immemorial. We express our gratitude to the Algonquin Peoples for hosting us on their ancestral lands.

Miigwetch - an Anishinaabemowin word meaning “thank you.”

LIP – Lanark & Renfrew pledges to uphold any future Treaties. Until a Treaty is in place, we remain committed to advocating for its realization, supporting the Algonquin Land Claim, and working with partners to continue advancing towards reconciliation. Treaties are complex, foundational agreements that recognize Indigenous Rights and title to the land, and we commit to honouring them in our work while encouraging others to do the same. Whether First Nation, newcomer, or descendant of settlers, we all live on Turtle Island (Canada), and we are all Treaty people

In our community-building and support for the integration of newcomers, we recognize our responsibility to uphold and advance Reconciliation. This includes raising awareness about Indigenous histories, cultures, and contributions, and acknowledging the ongoing impacts of Colonialism - such as the Indian Act, the legacy of residential schools, and intergenerational trauma.

For many who have come to Canada from countries around the world, there is a personal understanding of the invasion and colonization of homelands. By recognizing this shared experience, we deepen our understanding of the true history of Indigenous Peoples here and strengthen our connection to the land we now call home.

LIP- Lanark & Renfrew is committed to creating opportunities for learning, fostering respect and allyship, and embedding Reconciliation into our partnerships, programs, and daily work. We will continue to listen, learn, and grow in our journey toward truth and Reconciliation.





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Offer support to newcomers

to strengthen the community
& support the individual
lives within

our people & communities
can grow thru diversity
and unique perspectives,
where personhood is
celebrated, and
individuals feel
safe. ♥

- they feel welcome, feel safe
- stay in the community
- support businesses
- support the government
- one day, become proud Canadians!

All parents everywhere
who have a loved one under
the age of 25 yrs who are struggling
w/ mental health/addiction challenges, have
access to resources/services equally
FREE + not Alone

Everyone can
be part of a
community
home in the town

Community & individuals

Executive Summary

The Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) – Lanark & Renfrew Strategic Plan 2025–2028 sets out a focused, evidence-informed roadmap for strengthening newcomer attraction, inclusion, and long-term retention across Lanark and Renfrew Counties. Grounded in community consultation, regional research, and lived experience, the plan responds to shifting immigration policies, labour market pressures, and the unique realities of rural communities.

Building on more than a decade of partnership-driven work, this plan advances four strategic priorities: Coordinated Access, Community Learning, Social Connection, and Inclusive Economic Participation. Together, these priorities position LIP–Lanark & Renfrew as a connector, capacity-builder, and catalyst for welcoming and inclusive communities. Implementation will be guided through annual Community Plans, supported by strong governance, accountability to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), and continuous community engagement.

Message from LIP – Lanark & Renfrew

The Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) – Lanark & Renfrew is pleased to present the 2025-2028 strategic plan. This plan was developed with the guidance and contributions of the LIP Advisory Council, the community members, key stakeholders and partners who share a commitment to fostering welcoming communities across Lanark & Renfrew counties. Their insights and collaboration were essential in shaping priorities and actions for the next three (3) years.

We also acknowledge the support of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), whose funding, framework, and guidance enable our program and this strategic plan.

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1. Introduction

This Strategic Plan outlines the priorities and direction of LIP–Lanark & Renfrew for the 2025–2028 period. Developed through community consultation, research, and collaboration with the LIP Advisory Council, the plan reflects a shared commitment to supporting newcomer integration and fostering belonging across Lanark and Renfrew Counties.

The plan is designed as a living framework. Strategic priorities are advanced through annual Community Plans that allow LIP to remain responsive to changing community needs, policy shifts, and regional opportunities while maintaining alignment with IRCC objectives.

2. About LIP – Lanark & Renfrew

Established in 2011, the Local Immigration Partnership – Lanark & Renfrew serves the largest geographic LIP region in Ontario, spanning more than 10,200 km² across 26 municipalities. Administered by Algonquin College's Pembroke Campus, LIP convenes municipalities, service providers, employers, educators, and community organizations to strengthen local systems that support newcomer inclusion.

LIP's mandate includes community-based research, partnership development, strategic planning, and community engagement. By embedding equity, diversity, inclusion, and Truth and Reconciliation into regional strategies, LIP supports long-term newcomer retention and community resilience.

Purpose, Mission, Principles

Purpose:

To continue the development of inclusive and connected communities in Lanark & Renfrew by supporting newcomer integration, strengthening partnerships, promoting equitable access to services and reinforcing a sense of belonging.

Mission:

The LIP - Lanark & Renfrew fosters welcoming, inclusive, and resilient communities through collaborative, multi-sector partnerships and research-informed strategies. Guided by the LIP Advisory Council, our work is grounded in strength-based approaches and a commitment to the social, economic, and psychological well-being of newcomers and the communities that support their successful integration and long-term participation.

Principles:

Guided by its partnership with Algonquin College's Pembroke Campus and grounded in respect for the original stewards of this land, LIP – Lanark & Renfrew is committed to advancing Truth and Reconciliation. This commitment is reflected in the Seven Grandfather Teachings, Anishinaabe principles that guide our decision-making, partnerships, and accountability. These teachings guide not only the operations and partnerships of the LIP but also shape the actions, communications, and responsibilities of the LIP Advisory Council, including those carried out on its behalf.

The Seven Grandfather Teachings:

- Humility – Dbaadendiziwin – to know yourself as a sacred part of creation.
- Bravery – Aakwa'ode'ewin – to face the foe with integrity.
- Honesty – Gwekwaadziwin – facing a situation is to be brave.
- Wisdom – Nbwaakaawin – to cherish knowledge is to know wisdom.
- Truth – Debwewin- to know all these things.
- Respect – Mnaadendimowin – to honour all Creation is to have respect.
- Love – Zaagidwin – to know love is to know peace.

(Source: Seven Grandfather Teachings | Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2021. www.ola.org/en/seven-grandfather-teachings)

See Appendix A for the LIP Advisory Council – Terms of Reference (2025–2028)



3. Regional Context and Demographics

Understanding the regional context in which newcomers arrive, settle, and build their lives is essential to effective planning. Lanark and Renfrew Counties are experiencing demographic, economic, and policy shifts that directly influence newcomer attraction, integration, and long-term retention. These dynamics must be considered alongside national immigration policy changes, local labour market realities, and the lived experiences of newcomers in rural communities.

The National Immigration Landscape (2025–2026)

Canada's immigration environment is undergoing a period of recalibration. In response to mounting pressures on housing supply, health care capacity, and settlement systems, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) began implementing the 2025–2027 Immigration Levels Plan in 2024. This plan reflects a national effort to balance immigration objectives with system sustainability.

Key policy shifts include:

- A reduction in temporary residents to 5% of Canada's total population, down from approximately 6.5%.
- Permanent resident admissions are maintained at under 1% of the total population annually beyond 2027.
- A targeted increase in francophone immigration outside Quebec, rising from 4.68% in 2023 to 8.5% by 2025.
- A significant reduction in international student permits, including a 35% decrease in 2024 and a further reduction in 2025.

While these measures aim to stabilize national systems, they have direct implications for smaller and rural communities. Reduced international student flows, shifts in temporary residence pathways, and heightened competition for skilled immigrants increase the importance of coordinated settlement planning, employer readiness, and community capacity at the local level. For regions such as Lanark and Renfrew Counties, success will increasingly depend on retention, belonging, and integration, rather than solely on attraction.

Sense of Belonging and Community Integration

A strong sense of belonging is widely recognized as a cornerstone of successful newcomer integration and community well-being. Sense of belonging reflects the extent to which individuals feel connected to their community, whether through social relationships, cultural identity, a sense of safety, or participation in everyday life.

Research consistently demonstrates that a strong sense of belonging is associated with:

- Greater social cohesion and inclusion.
- Improved mental and physical health outcomes.
- Better access to health and social services.
- Reduced engagement in risky behaviours.

For newcomers, sense of belonging is shaped by both individual and structural factors, including language proficiency, cultural and religious identity, access to services, and experiences of inclusion or discrimination. In rural communities, additional factors—such as geographic distance, transportation access, and availability of social and cultural spaces—play a particularly important role.

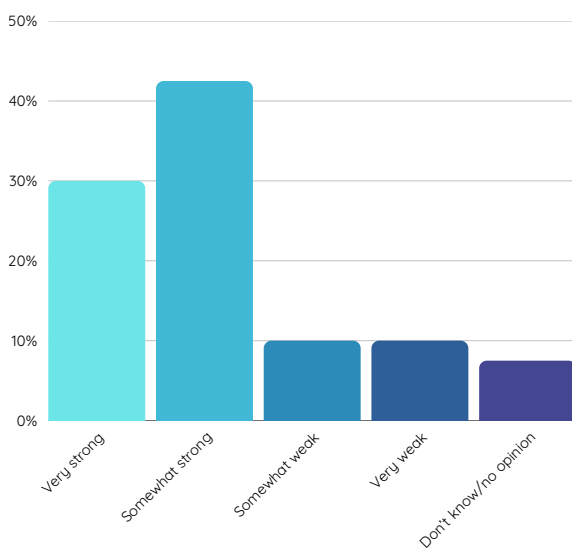
National data indicate that Canadians' sense of belonging has increased in recent years. Statistics Canada reports that 83% of individuals in 2025 reported a somewhat strong or very strong sense of belonging to Canada, rising from 72% in 2022. Among naturalized citizens, this figure increases to 88%. Provincial differences diminish when socioeconomic conditions and experiences of discrimination are considered, underscoring the importance of supportive local environments.

Sense of Belonging in Lanark and Renfrew Counties

In 2024, LIP–Lanark & Renfrew conducted a regional study examining newcomer experiences with services, information access, and community connection across Eastern Ontario. Survey and focus group participants residing in Lanark and Renfrew Counties were asked specifically about their sense of belonging to their local town or community.

Findings indicate:

- 30% of respondents reported a very strong sense of belonging
- 42.5% reported a somewhat strong sense of belonging
- 20% reported a somewhat weak or very weak sense of belonging
- 7.5% reported no opinion or uncertainty



While the proportion reporting a very strong sense of belonging is lower than provincial averages, the combined total of respondents reporting a somewhat strong or very strong sense of belonging (72.5%) aligns closely with national benchmarks. These findings suggest that newcomers may feel strongly connected to Canada overall, while local connection in smaller communities requires more intentional, place-based support.

The results reinforce the importance of continued investment in social connection, community learning, and inclusive spaces that foster trust, safety, and participation at the local level.



Regional Demographics and Population Distribution

Lanark and Renfrew Counties together encompass over 10,200 km², making this the largest geographic LIP region in Ontario. The population is distributed across a mix of towns, townships, and rural municipalities, presenting both opportunities and service delivery challenges.

Lanark County has an estimated population of 83,500–85,000, with growth concentrated in Carleton Place, Mississippi Mills, Smiths Falls, and Perth.

Renfrew County has an estimated population of 114,600–115,900, with major population centres including Pembroke, Petawawa, Arnprior, and Renfrew.

Population growth is uneven across municipalities, reflecting varying housing availability, employment opportunities, and infrastructure capacity. Detailed municipal population estimates and demographic tables are provided in Appendix B.

Labour Market Context

Labour market conditions across both counties present significant opportunities for newcomer participation, alongside structural challenges that influence retention.

Data from the Labour Market Group of Renfrew and Lanark (2024–2025) indicate:

- Median hourly wages in the mid-\$25 range, with annual earnings just over \$53,000.
- Persistent workforce shortages in health care, long-term care, health support services, retail, hospitality, and community services.
- Entry- and mid-level employment opportunities that require targeted supports to sustain long-term participation.

Renfrew County's labour market is shaped by federal, defence, research, and STEM-related employers, particularly in Pembroke and Arnprior. These sectors offer opportunities to attract highly skilled newcomers but also require coordinated approaches to credential recognition, language training, and settlement support.

In Lanark County, employment growth is driven primarily by service-based industries, with job postings concentrated in Carleton Place and Mississippi Mills. Transportation access, childcare availability, and employment readiness supports remain critical to workforce participation.

Broader economic forecasts point to slower national growth in 2026, alongside increased immigrant outmigration—particularly among highly skilled workers. These trends heighten the importance of retention-focused strategies, especially in rural regions with limited workforce capacity.

Implications for Strategic Planning

Taken together, these national, regional, and local dynamics underscore the need for a coordinated, community-based approach to newcomer integration. Aligning immigration with labour market needs, strengthening local belonging, and supporting employers and service providers are essential to sustaining population growth and economic resilience in Lanark and Renfrew Counties.

Detailed demographic data, labour market tables, and reference sources are provided in Appendix B to support further analysis and implementation planning.

4. Strategic Planning Process

The 2025–2028 Strategic Plan was developed through a community-driven and evidence-informed process. In June 2025, LIP facilitated four consultation sessions with newcomers, employers, service providers, and municipal representatives. Input from community stakeholders and members of the LIP Advisory Council was complemented by research support from the Smith School of Business at Queen’s University.

Findings from consultations, surveys, and focus groups directly informed the identification of strategic priorities; implementation approaches are provided in *Appendix D*.

5. What We Have Achieved (2021–2025)

Over the past decade, the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) – Lanark & Renfrew has established itself as a trusted convener and catalyst for newcomer inclusion across the region. Through strong partnerships and data-informed approaches, LIP has advanced initiatives that strengthen newcomer attraction, retention, and meaningful participation in community life.

Key achievements include generating region-specific research on international students and newcomer experiences, creating platforms that foster belonging and amplify newcomer voices, and building employer and community capacity through shared learning and inclusive practice. Flagship initiatives such as Culture Connect, the Welcoming Network, Learning & Connections Circle Mentorship Program, and collaborative workforce strategies have strengthened social connections, supported economic participation, and improved coordination across sectors.

Together, these efforts have positioned LIP–Lanark & Renfrew as a central connector, bridging research, community engagement, and systems-level collaboration to build welcoming, inclusive, and resilient communities.

These achievements form the foundation for the next strategic cycle and are listed in Appendix D.



What We



HAVE



Achieved

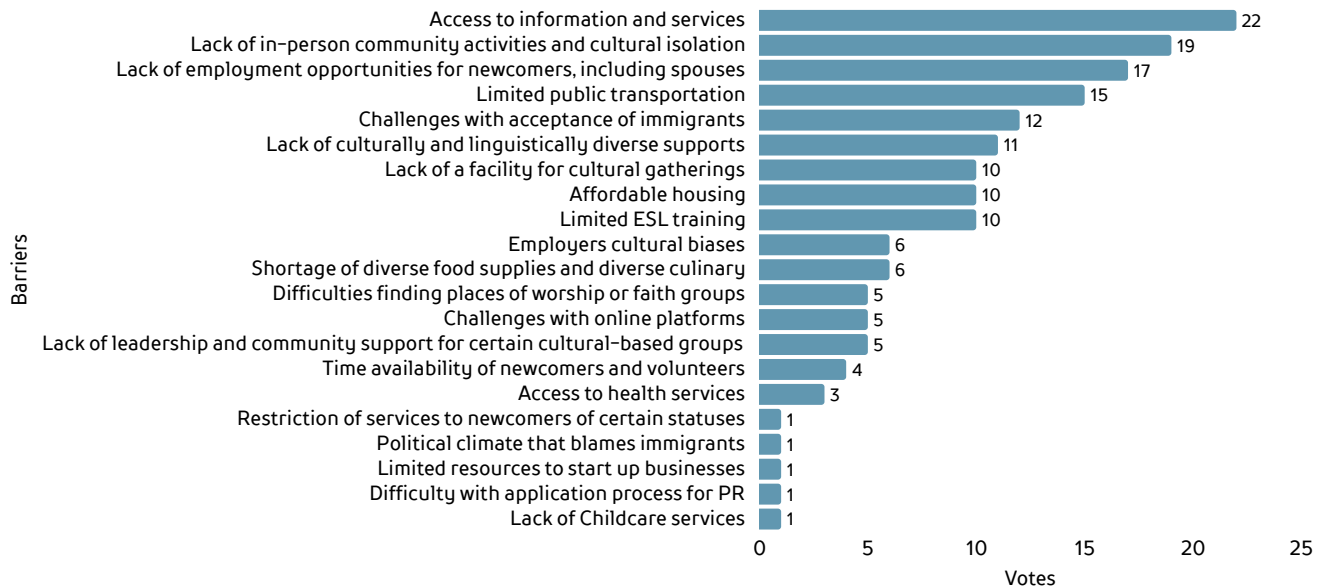


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6. SWOT Analysis

To inform the 2025–2028 Strategic Plan, LIP–Lanark & Renfrew undertook a comprehensive Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis, examining both internal organizational factors and external environmental conditions. The analysis draws on data gathered through Advisory Council consultations, internal reflection, focus groups with newcomers and community partners, and regional research. A detailed version of the SWOT analysis, including strategy matrices and supporting evidence, is provided in Appendix D.



Strengths

LIP–Lanark & Renfrew benefits from strong foundations built over more than a decade of community-based work. A key strength identified through the analysis is collaboration. LIP works with over 50 stakeholders across municipalities, employers, service providers, education, libraries, and community organizations. These partnerships enable shared learning, coordinated initiatives, and broader reach than any single organization could achieve on its own.

LIP’s status as a well-established organization, administered by Algonquin College’s Pembroke Campus and funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), further strengthens its role in the region. This structure provides operational stability, access to research expertise and ethics oversight, and strong institutional credibility. Stakeholders consistently noted trust in LIP’s leadership and its ability to convene partners across sectors.

Finally, the analysis highlighted the impact of LIP’s programming. Initiatives such as Culture Connect, Welcome Packs/Welcome Wagon, employer engagement projects, and library partnerships position LIP as a central integrator, or “glue,” within the local settlement ecosystem. This role allows LIP to bridge service gaps, amplify partner efforts, and connect newcomers to a wide range of supports.

Weaknesses

Despite these strengths, several internal challenges were identified. Access to information remains a persistent issue for newcomers. While LIP provides tools and resources, consultations revealed confusion about which organizations deliver which services, and limited awareness of available programs. The absence of a clearly coordinated information hub limits newcomers' ability to navigate systems efficiently.

Resource constraints also present a challenge. LIP serves a vast geographic region, over 10,500 square kilometres across 28 municipalities, which complicates consistent in-person engagement and equitable access to programming. Like many community-based initiatives, LIP relies on finite funding and must balance ambition with capacity.

The availability and sustainability of volunteers were identified as an additional weakness. Volunteers play an important role in supporting events, advisory structures, and community initiatives; however, recruitment and retention are increasingly difficult due to time constraints and competing demands. This can affect program continuity if not addressed strategically.

Opportunities

The external environment presents several promising opportunities. Consultations revealed a growing appreciation of diversity among employers, municipal staff, and service providers. Importantly, these stakeholders demonstrated awareness of the cultural isolation and inclusion challenges newcomers face and expressed a willingness to strengthen cross-cultural competencies through training, coaching, and inclusive practices. This readiness creates fertile ground for expanded community learning and capacity-building initiatives.

Transportation initiatives underway across the region represent another key opportunity. While limited transportation remains a barrier to integration, municipalities are piloting on-demand ride services, exploring intermunicipal transit options, and conducting feasibility studies. These efforts, if aligned with newcomer needs, could significantly improve access to employment, services, and social connections, particularly for international students, families, seniors, and persons with disabilities.

Continued government support also offers an opportunity. IRCC-funded settlement programming, including Lanark and Renfrew Immigrant Settlement Services (LRISS), alongside initiatives such as the Ontario REDI Pilot, reflect sustained public investment in newcomer integration and rural immigration pathways. LIP is well-positioned to serve as a connector, ensuring these programs are visible, accessible, and effectively integrated at the community level.

Threats

At the same time, the SWOT analysis identified several external threats that could undermine newcomer retention and community stability. Economic pressures, including rising costs of living, housing shortages, youth unemployment, and slower projected economic growth, may limit newcomers' ability to meet basic needs and remain in the region long term. These pressures are compounded by shifts in federal immigration policy aimed at moderating growth.

Cultural isolation and acceptance emerged as a significant concern. Newcomers identified gaps, including limited cultural gatherings, the absence of established community leaders, a lack of culturally diverse food options, and few dedicated spaces for cultural events. Participants also noted broader societal trends, including growing anti-immigrant sentiment linked to housing and population growth concerns, which may affect feelings of safety and belonging.

Finally, barriers to accessing essential services, including childcare, healthcare, language training, immigration supports, and culturally appropriate services, continue to challenge newcomer integration. Without coordinated responses, these service gaps risk reinforcing isolation and limiting long-term retention.

Strategic Implications

The SWOT analysis clearly demonstrates that LIP's strengths in collaboration, credibility, and program delivery provide a strong platform to address both opportunities and threats. At the same time, weaknesses in information access, resource capacity, and volunteer sustainability highlight areas that require intentional, system-level solutions.

The four strategic priorities outlined in this plan are directly informed by this analysis. Together, they leverage LIP's strengths, respond to external opportunities, and address the structural challenges identified through consultation and research. Full SWOT matrices and strategy alignment details are available in Appendix D.

7. Strategic Priorities (2025–2028)

Through soliciting feedback from a cross-section of key stakeholders, LIP was able to gain a better understanding of:

- What a welcoming community looks like today.
- The lived experiences of newcomers and newcomer-serving organizations.
- Current gaps and barriers facing newcomers in our region.
- Current needs and support that can be explored by organizations and businesses.
- The community's perception of newcomers and the influences of broader political and social events in rural communities.
- What the role of the LIP could look like over the next 3 years.

Through focus groups and community consultations, four strategic priorities were identified. These priorities build on the foundation of past initiatives while reflecting the lived realities of newcomers in Lanark and Renfrew Counties.

- **Coordinated Access** - Participants consistently noted the lack of a central hub where information and resources could be accessed to support newcomers to Lanark & Renfrew. As Settlement Services continue to establish themselves in the region, the LIP will shift toward a connector role, facilitating collaboration and ensuring that individuals, organizations, and communities can access and share the supports newcomers need.



- **Community Learning** - Focus groups revealed gaps in confidence and capacity when navigating cultural differences, particularly within workplaces and child and family-serving organizations. This pillar emphasizes both formal training and informal exchanges to strengthen cultural competence, promote inclusion, and increase awareness of community resources.
- **Social Connection** - Newcomers often face barriers to building community due to limited public transportation and the region's large geography. This priority focuses on fostering partnerships to create inclusive physical and virtual spaces where newcomers can connect, build relationships, and experience a sense of belonging.
- **Inclusive Economic Participation** - As immigration and labour market needs continue to evolve, newcomers represent vital contributors to the region's economic growth. This pillar supports employers and organizations in attracting, hiring, onboarding, and retaining newcomer talent; while ensuring they have the resources to do so without straining their own capacities.

8. Implementation and Governance

The Strategic Plan is implemented through annual Community Plans aligned with the four strategic priorities. Algonquin College's Pembroke Campus provides administrative oversight, while the LIP Advisory Council offers strategic guidance. Progress is monitored through evaluation tools, partner feedback, and annual reporting to IRCC.

This governance model ensures transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

9. Core Community Initiatives

LIP will continue delivering core initiatives that support research, intercultural learning, storytelling, employer engagement, and newcomer leadership. These initiatives provide continuity while supporting the implementation of new priorities.

10. Looking Ahead

The 2025–2028 Strategic Plan positions the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) – Lanark & Renfrew to respond proactively to a changing immigration landscape while remaining grounded in the lived realities of newcomers and the strengths of our communities. Building on more than a decade of collaboration, research, and community engagement, this plan reflects both where we are and where we are collectively headed.

As national immigration policies evolve and pressures on housing, labour markets, and settlement systems persist, success in Lanark and Renfrew Counties will increasingly depend on coordination, inclusion, and retention. The four strategic priorities outlined in this plan—Coordinated Access, Community Learning, Social Connection, and Inclusive Economic Participation—provide a clear framework for action while allowing flexibility to adapt to emerging needs and opportunities.

Implementation of this plan will be guided through annual Community Plans, ongoing evaluation, and continuous dialogue with community partners, newcomers, and the LIP Advisory Council. Progress will be measured not only by activities delivered, but by the strength of relationships built, the accessibility of systems improved, and the sense of belonging experienced by newcomers across the region.

Above all, this plan reaffirms LIP–Lanark & Renfrew’s role as a connector, facilitator, and advocate, working alongside municipalities, employers, service providers, Indigenous partners, and newcomers to build welcoming, inclusive, and resilient communities.

The appendices that follow provide additional context, data, and reference materials that support the analysis and priorities outlined in this plan and serve as resources for implementation, accountability, and ongoing learning.

