

Local Immigration Partnerships, Immigrant-Serving Agencies and COVID-19: Lessons for the Future

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Presentation for Newcomer Inclusion Table, York Region, May 23, 2023



Takeways



Immigrant COVID-19 deaths early in pandemic about twice that of other Canadians: Statscan

HINA ALAM
VANCOUVER
THE CANADIAN PRESS
PUBLISHED JUNE 10, 2021



HEALTH Low COVID-19 vaccine uptake in vulnerable Ottawa neighbourhoods blamed on barriers

By Craig Lord · Global News
Posted August 11, 2021 1:01 pm · Updated August 11, 2021 3:58 pm

How local volunteers are helping Toronto's least vaccinated community get shots in arms



Only 57% of residents over 18 are immunized against COVID-19 in Taylor-Massey

Michelle McCann · Posted: Jul 10, 2021 4:00 AM ET | Last Updated: July 10, 2021



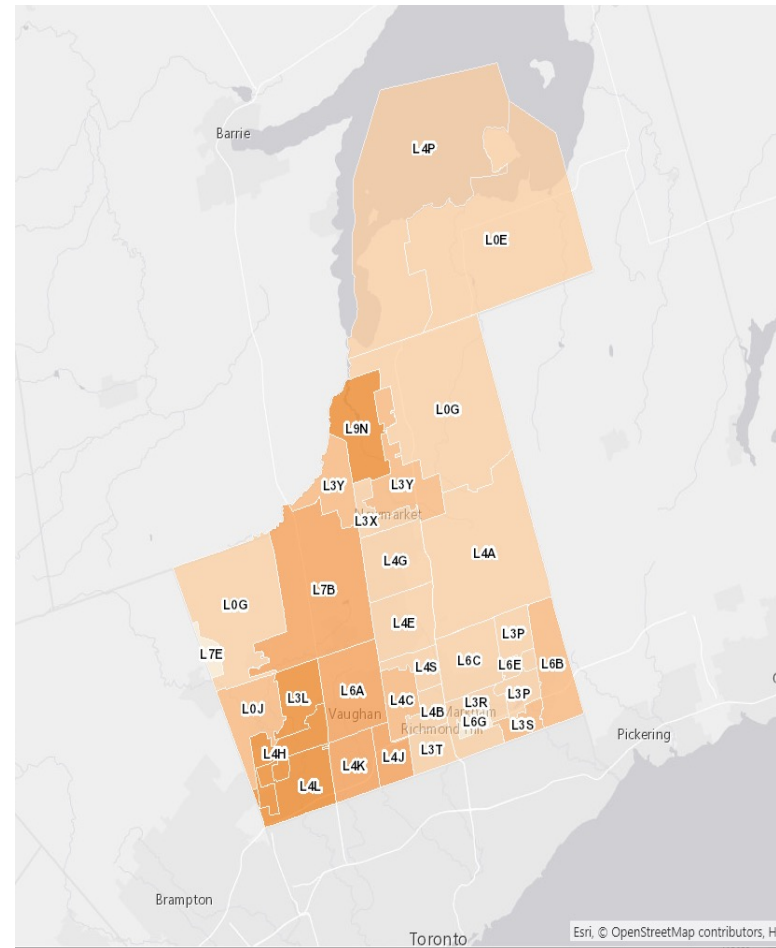
Community ambassadors stand outside an apartment building in the east end neighbourhood of Massey-Taylor. Volunteers have been knocking on doors in the area to encourage residents to get vaccinated. (Submitted by WoodGreen Community Services)

- In Ontario, Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) and Immigrant Serving Agencies (ISAs) acted to mitigate inequalities revealed by COVID-19
- Important lessons about effective institutional responses to improve settlement and integration



Institutional responses

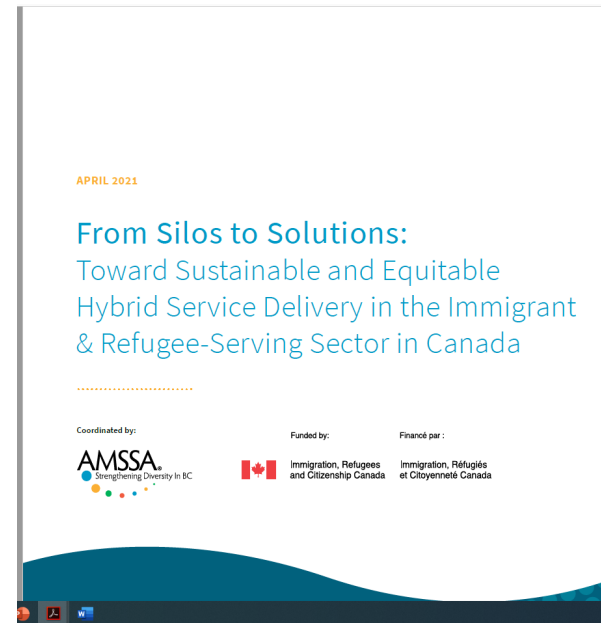
- Surveys and focus groups with ISA management and workers and LIP representatives
- 4 key pandemic actions
 - Service provision
 - Information exchange
 - Collaboration
 - Advocacy



BMRC
IRMU

Service Provision

- ISAs adapted:
 - Put services online
 - Accelerated technological change
 - Expanded eligibility for services
 - Safely maintained critical in-person services
 - Assisted with volunteer efforts
- LIPS facilitated:
 - Brainstorming and problem-solving
 - Learning within and across sectors



Information Exchange

- LIPs
 - Convened and chaired intersectoral consultation tables
 - Health
 - Employment, food security, and other essential services
 - Initiated and supported collection and analysis of information about migrant COVID experiences
- With ISAs, LIPs were recognized as immigration experts

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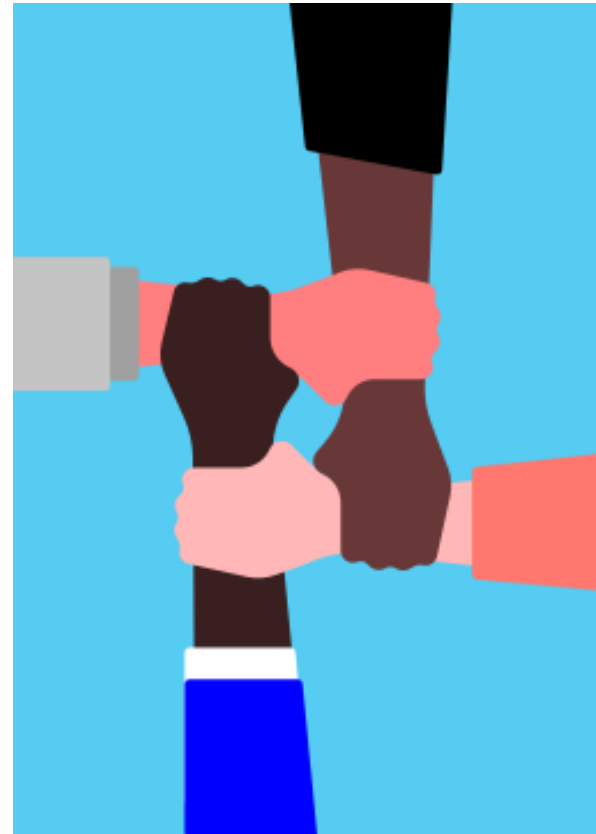
Community ambassadors stand outside an apartment building in the east end neighbourhood of Massey-Taylor. Volunteers have been knocking on doors in the area to encourage residents to get vaccinated. (Submitted by WoodGreen Community Services)



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Collaboration

- Deepened relationships with:
 - Existing and new partners, e.g., food banks
- Involved diverse institutions:
 - Small and emerging settlement agencies, multiple public sector providers, ethnocultural groups, faith organizations, etc.
- Drew on past experience:
 - Syrian refugee initiative



Advocacy



BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDES TECHNOLOGY, ACCESS AND SUPPORT FOR SENIORS (TASS)

BACKGROUND

COVID-19 pandemic started in March 2020. Public spaces were closed. Human Endeavour recognized the need to pivot to online services and offered TASS senior-friendly technology in May 2020.

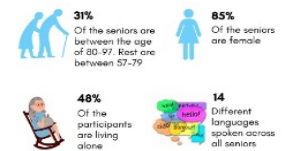
May 2020 to November 2021, 600+ free tablets with data and technical support helpline have been provided to seniors through partners across Ontario. TASS helpline engaged in 15000+ calls and remote technical interactions. 25+ organizations are partnering through collective impact TASS project.



OBJECTIVE

Gather feedback from seniors who used TASS tablets for at least 3 months.

DEMOGRAPHICS



TASS IMPACT ON SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND PHYSICAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH



85%

Seniors agreed that TASS tablets have helped maintain their social circle during the pandemic



86%

Seniors agreed that TASS tablets have helped maintain their physical and emotional health



79%

Seniors agreed that having their own tablets increased their independence



Seniors were able to maintain connections with family and friends and make new friends through virtual online programs



70% of the seniors attended more community programs than pre-COVID

Funded by The United Way Greater Toronto / Allie: Slight Fund, York Region, Government of Ontario, and Government of Canada. Project and Research Partners: Research by York University. Contact: info@humanendeavour.org



Resilience and the Pandemic



Global Agenda | COVID-19 | Risk and Resilience | Pandemic Preparedness and Response

3 key resilient post-pandemic recovery



History shows that in times of crisis, stability and decisiveness

- Social resilience emphasizes that the capacity to overcome settlement challenges depends on institutions:
 - Relational
 - Learned and dynamic
 - Potentially transformative for migrants and institutions



Enabling Social Resilience in a Pandemic

- LIPs promote social resilience by:
 - Involving diverse organizations
 - Multiple sectors
 - Different sizes
 - Varied funding regimes
 - Promoting collaboration
 - Knowledge to encourage collaboration
 - Social relations that promote collaboration
 - Promoting respectful dialogue (responsive, regular, and cooperative)
 - With ISAs, they are mission-driven advocates



Sustaining Resilience: Recommendations

- Expanded eligibility for settlement and integration services
- Sustained and flexible funding for LIPs and ISAs
- Inclusion of LIPs and ISAs in settlement and integration policy-making
- Continued recognition and inclusion of LIPs' and ISAs' expertise & contributions across sectors



Questions/Comments

Thanks to all participants in the survey and focus groups and Tara Bedard, Waterloo Region

This presentation draws on **Resilience, Advocacy and the Settlement Sector: Learning from the Pandemic** by Valerie Preston, John Shields, Lisa Alfieri-Sladen, Henry Akanko, Tara Bedard, Mary Ellen Bernard, Noor Din, Vera Dodic, Lucia Harrison, Hindia Mohamed, Prince Sibanda, Stephan Reichhold available from V. Preston upon request.



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