

OLIP Council Opening Remarks: Dick Stewart, Chair
First Annual Ottawa Immigration Forum, October 1, 2012



[Forum MC's Opening Remarks: Irene Zhou and Guy Matte]

- On behalf of the OLIP Council, my colleague Salimatou Diallo and I welcome you and thank you all for coming to the 1st Annual Ottawa Immigration Forum.
- I have the honor of being the Chair of the OLIP Council, which brings together 30 local institutions and organizations from multiple sectors.
- The OLIP partners include: the four school boards, local colleges and universities, neighborhood based health and resource centres; settlement service providers, the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, the Local Health Integration Network, the United Way of Ottawa, business leaders, children and youth service providers, and multiple City of Ottawa departments.
- I would invite the members of the OLIP Council to stand up for moment, so that you can be recognized.
- Thank you colleagues.
- Now that you know them, you can engage them in the break and get to learn more details about what we do.
- The mandate of OLIP is to strengthen Ottawa's capacity to attract, settle, and integrate immigrants. Fuelling our work in this mandate is generous funding by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and more recently by the Community Foundation of Ottawa.
- With the Community Foundation funding, the OLIP secretariat is working to strengthen information flow between the members of the vast partnership that is OLIP.
- Our Vision is to help create a vibrant and prosperous national capital that is strengthened through the contribution of immigrants. The target beneficiary of the work of OLIP is the whole community, including immigrants.
- OLIP is not a direct service provider. It is not a funder; nor is it a part of government. Rather it is a community vehicle for establishing and working towards a shared vision, through collaborative leadership and joint action.

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- In June 2011, OLIP launched the Ottawa Immigration Strategy, which was developed collaboratively and collectively by a broad range of stakeholders, including immigrants, settlement, social, health, and education service providers, employers, senior staff from the City of Ottawa and policy makers.
 - In many ways, creating the Strategy for the way forward was the easy part. The past 15 months have been about implementation - that's the hard part!!
 - It's harder because within strategy document concepts like collaboration, working with new partners in a new way and sharing risk are just concepts.
 - Putting these concepts into practice requires a measure of trust among the partners; it requires shared awareness; ... and new ways of knowing our community. Most importantly, it requires leadership and sustained commitment by partners as well as the technical and financial resources that are necessary to sustain and animate the complex process of inter-sectoral collaboration.
 - From our experience over the last 15 months, it is evident to me that we are indeed up to the challenge!
 - In this short period, we the OLIP partners and our stakeholders have planted together important seeds for Ottawa's economic and social development. Allow me to highlight here our collective progress in several critical areas:
 - Micro loan programs to capitalize on immigrants' entrepreneurship drive and help them overcome the critical barrier of access to loans are established. The partnerships leading this collaboratives are comprised of the Ottawa Community Loan Fund, the City of Ottawa, the Ontario Centre of Excellence, the Carleton Centre for Community Innovation (3ci), and the Catholic Centre for Immigrants. Microloans for francophone entrepreneurs are also established thanks to funding from FedDev Ontario, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and the Fondation Franco Ontarienne.
 - Clearer pathways for immigrant job seekers to find employment in the jobs in the trades. This is critical because there are severe current and deepening skills shortages in key trade sectors; while at the same time we have high levels of unemployment and underemployment among immigrants. This work is funded by the Ontario Ministry of

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Citizenship and Immigration and led by the City of Ottawa, World Skills, and the YMCA / YWCA

- Improved access to essential health care for refugee families, thanks to funding by the Local Health Integration Network and a cross-sectoral partnership between Somerset West Community Health Centre; Family Physicians, and the Settlement Sector.
- New initiative to build the health literacy of immigrants led by City of Ottawa's public health department and implemented in collaboration with settlement and health care service providers.
- A new and very promising approach to language service delivery thanks to cooperation between the federal and provincial governments; and thanks to a stronger capacity for collaboration by local language training providers in the settlement sector and in the school boards. The new Coordinated Language Assessment and Referral System (CLARS) will be piloted in Ottawa starting this fall and is led by the YMCA/YWCA.
- New resources and expanded partnership to the Youth Futures program, which aims to promote greater access and success in post-secondary education.

[Salimatou's speech]