



WELCOMING OTTAWA WEEK
SEMAINE D'ACCUEIL À OTTAWA

WELCOMING OTTAWA WEEK

June 23 to 28, 2014:

BACKGROUND (Q&A)

Q1: Why do we need a Welcoming Ottawa Week (WOW)?

Welcoming Ottawa Week was launched in 2013 to respond to two broad priorities of [Ottawa's Immigration Strategy \(OIS\)](#), unveiled in June 2011. The first priority is to create multiple opportunities and pathways for all Ottawa residents, including immigrants, to connect culturally, intellectually and socially in order to achieve a cohesive civic culture that draws on the creativity of all residents to develop a diverse, vibrant, and cosmopolitan city (*2nd Priority under 'Integration Capacity Development' - OIS, page 55*).

The second priority is to draw attention to Ottawa's flourishing diversity and to strengthen the City's competitive advantage, allowing it to attract new residents and capital from around the world (OIS, page 37).

WOW is designed to serve both as a showcase for Ottawa's diversity and as a magnet to attract more immigrants to the city.

Q2: What does WOW achieve?

Prospective newcomers are attracted to diverse and vibrant cities where they perceive that they will have opportunities to participate, contribute and belong. In response to these two priorities, the Welcoming Ottawa Week aims to achieve three objectives:

1. To create a cohesive civic culture in Ottawa through sports, cultural, and intellectual activities that bring together newcomers and long-time residents. A civic culture that inculcates a sense of belonging to immigrants and ethno-cultural minority communities
2. To enable Ottawans to express and reflect on the warmth of our welcome to new immigrants by creating opportunities to showcase successes and to discuss challenges
3. To promote Ottawa (nationally and internationally) as a diverse and vibrant national capital that can attract new residents and investments

Q3: What happens during WOW?

Welcoming Ottawa Week was conceived to include six principal elements, as follows:

1. Learning events, such as academic seminars reflecting on our challenges and opportunities in attracting and integrating immigrants
2. Sports events in neighborhood parks in Ottawa, featuring sports that are favored by immigrants such as soccer, cricket, running initiatives, and Tai Chi.
3. Immigration Forum showcasing and celebrating the successes of the OLIP partners and enabling community dialogue on how to remove barriers in immigrants' integration
4. Artists events and various entertainments reflecting immigrants and minority communities' artistic contributions
5. Documentary and film screenings in neighborhood parks intended to bring together neighbors to reflect on different aspects of immigrants' integration – to create empathy for the experience of the newcomer
6. Formal events (galas) bringing together local civic, economic, and religious dignitaries

In 2014, we have introduced a new component called [WOW Ambassadors](#), designed to celebrate the welcoming spirit of Ottawans of all backgrounds towards new immigrants.

Q4: What is the [WOW Ambassador Initiative](#)?

WOW Ambassadors are Ottawa residents (of any background /walk of life) who have demonstrated the human qualities of openness, curiosity, and friendly connection across difference that can be so enriching, but is not always there or easy to achieve or demonstrate in our busy lives.

To find [WOW Ambassadors](#), OLIP issued a call for nominations addressed to foreign born residents of Ottawa to nominate individuals who made a difference in their settlement journey by being open and supportive; someone outside their own families who went the extra mile to help them adjust to life in Ottawa, and whose actions left an impression. These can be a neighbor, a stranger who became a friend, a colleague in the workplace, a teacher/professor, or even a political representative.

The stories we gather will be shared on our facebook and a selected several will be chosen to be WOW Ambassadors. The WOW Ambassadors will be featured in a special Welcoming Ottawa Week photo exhibition by photographer Dwayne Brown, the founder of the [loveOttawa](#) project.

Q5: Who is involved in WOW?

WOW is orchestrated by the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership (OLIP), championed by the Mayor of Ottawa, and fuelled by the hard work of OLIP partners. OLIP is a collaborative community funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and mandated to strengthen Ottawa's capacity to welcome, settle, and integrate immigrants.

OLIP partners include the City of Ottawa and Local Agencies Serving Immigrants (LASI), the four local school boards, universities and colleges, health and social service providers, the Champlain Local Health Integration Network, children and youth service providers, employers and employer associations, such

as the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, the Ottawa Police Service, Ottawa Community Housing, and the United Way Ottawa.

WOW activities target all Ottawans in their various roles and relationships with newcomers as neighbours, co-workers, employers, educators, representatives in Parliament, city council, religious leaders, civil servants, artists, and as members of the media.

Sponsors of the events planned in the 2014 Welcoming Ottawa include: OLIP, the City of Ottawa, University of Ottawa, Carleton University, Algonquin College, La Cité Collegiale, Cultural Pluralism Movement in Ontario (CPAMO), Multicultural Arts in Schools and Communities, the Ottawa Public Library, Catholic Centre for Immigrants, Immigrant Women Services Organization, 211 Community Information Centre, Somerset Business Improvement Area, Indigenous Walking Tours, and many others.

Q6: How does the Mayor champion WOW?

In June 2013, the Mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson, proclaimed the last week of June of every year as the Welcoming Ottawa Week (WOW) – that is, a time we set aside to express Ottawa’s hospitality to new immigrants.

Through this proclamation, the Mayor of Ottawa invites residents to recognize that a large proportion of residents arrive here as immigrants, and have settled in our city to raise families, and contribute to Ottawa’s quality of life and civic identity. Moreover, the Mayor is highlighting the fact that for Ottawa to be viable, it needs to continue attracting immigrants from all over the world.

The proclamation of Welcoming Ottawa Week by the Mayor of Ottawa has both symbolic and practical values. On the practical front, the Mayor’s championship helps to galvanize Ottawa’s leadership and mobilize key institutions to work together and harder to make Ottawa a welcoming city. This includes employers, educators, government agencies, voluntary sector workers, religious leaders, and the public at large.

On the symbolic front, the proclamation of the Welcoming Ottawa Week carries a strong message to both current and prospective immigrants that Ottawa respects the human journey of new immigrants to start all over in a new community and is supportive of their settlement and integration.

Q7: How exactly does WOW help make immigrants feel more welcome in Ottawa?

The integration process is challenging. Immigrants must find suitable housing, obtain employment, arrange schooling for their children, try to get their credentials and experiences recognized, and develop supportive social networks. This takes time and a huge effort, and it may make immigrants feel marginalized.

The length and difficulties of the journey to full integration varies and is based on factors like age, education, language proficiency, cultural distance with the new host community, family status, and pre-existing relationships with local residents.

Fortunately, Ottawa residents value and welcome immigrants and assist them daily in their integration process. Our goal is to create more opportunities to welcome newcomers and help them navigate the challenges they face.

During the Welcoming Ottawa Week, the following objectives are realised:

- Create a more unified community with greater trust and understanding among residents;
- Create champions to advance the goals of WOW and to make Ottawa's success in attracting and integrating immigrants more visible;
- Make immigrants, both new arrivals and those who have been here for a long time, feel more welcome and better able to participate in building Ottawa's future;
- Sustain Ottawa's reputation at the national and international levels as an attractive, diverse, cosmopolitan city where diversity thrives and newcomers are welcomed.

Q8: How will we ever know if Ottawa is in fact a welcoming city?

Three broad categories of indicators will tell us about how welcoming Ottawa is. Those categories include the levels of engagement in newcomer integration of governments and local institutions; residents' welcoming attitudes to newcomers; and the ease with which immigrants can access employment opportunities, housing, social services, education and health care.

Q9: Ottawa has a long tradition of welcoming refugees from Vietnam, Kosovo, Somalia, Rwanda, Burma, etc. What more can we do?

Three things have changed in Ottawa's immigration strategy:

1. The flow of newcomers to Ottawa has broadened considerably and now includes substantial numbers of skilled workers and international students.
2. Ottawa is seeing large numbers of Francophone immigrants who were originally destined to Quebec. Some of these immigrants may still live in Quebec but they work in Ottawa.
3. Ottawa is more interested in recruiting newcomers in order to boost local prosperity and stimulate local investment, rather than provide humanitarian assistance.

Q10: How many immigrants do we have every year?

Ottawa received a total of 12,000 newcomers in 2012 split equally between permanent residents and temporary migrants. The latter category includes equal proportions of temporary foreign workers and international students.

Q11: How does this compare with other Canadian cities, such as Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver?

Ottawa's intake of immigrants, students and temporary foreign workers is in orders of magnitude smaller than that of Canada's three big metropolitan regions: Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. That said, compared to mid-sized Canadian cities, Ottawa is a top destination for new immigrants. Ottawa is also the second largest destination of immigrants in Ontario after Toronto.

Q12: Why is welcoming newcomers important?

Newcomers are essential for Ottawa's future prosperity, growth and cosmopolitan development. Successful newcomer settlement and integration requires a combination of government policy and investment, engaged and knowledgeable institutions, and welcoming attitudes.

The bottom line is that unless immigrants and other newcomers are made to feel welcome, they will leave, taking with them assets and providing no 'return' on Ottawa's investments in training and settlement. Apart from such economic arguments, there is universal agreement that Ottawans want to live in an inclusive and unified city, not one that confines immigrants to separate communities.

For more information, please contact:
Hindia Mohamoud,
OLIP Director
Email: hindia@olip-plio.ca
Phone: 613-262-6640

Hashtag: #2014WOW, #Ottawa, #OLIP-PLIO.

 <http://www.facebook.com/OttawaLIP>

 https://twitter.com/OLIP_PLIO

URL: <http://www.olip-plio.ca>