



*3rd Ottawa Immigration Forum
Monday June 22, 2015 | 8am-12:30pm*

*The First Five Years of our Partnership: Learning,
Accomplishments & the Way Forward*

Speech by Carl & Caroline

Good morning ladies and gentlemen,

It's good to hear our three levels of government speak so enthusiastically about the integration of immigrants.

We are fortunate to have this sort of commitment from our governments.

This success has been in the works for a long time. It didn't arise overnight. In fact, the settlement sector and the city are well known to each other.

The history of our relationship pre-dates OLIP by many years but, since OLIP's arrival, the partnership has really come to life with the City adopting a more formal

approach and injecting more resources and intellect into shared goals.

What began as fellow travellers, sharing a road and occasionally joining forces, has matured into a full-fledged partnership thanks to OLIP's work. And here is our first learning.

Learning #1

It is not enough to have good ideas and good intentions. Moving forward requires dedicated resources. OLIP has been a key dedicated resource to move Ottawa towards its aspirations when it comes to immigrant integration

It's our job this morning to help set the stage for an exchange of ideas about where we, as a community, should focus our efforts.

To do this, we will need to tell you a little about our work over past five years... the work of about 200 smart, dedicated people who've invested their time, and the

time and resources of their institutions, to help make Ottawa a more welcoming community.

Five years ago, a group of us – here in the city – decided to take advantage of a new opportunity that had originated in the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement. The opportunity I'm referring to is the Local Immigration Partnership initiative, or LIP.

LIP was premised on the idea that newcomer integration was not simply about having the federal or provincial government offering, or buying, the right package of newcomer services. Instead, it recast integration as a process that is rooted in local planning, institutional change, community partnerships and collaborative leadership.

LIP reasserted the importance of 'place' for newcomer integration ... which was attractive to those of us who work in the community. We couldn't resist ... and so, after putting together a successful application, we hired a project director - I'm sure everyone knows Hindia Mohamoud - created an executive team ... and formed a

council made up of organizations that have an important role to play in the creation of a welcoming community.

We wanted the OLIP Council to represent the community because integration isn't confined to any one domain or any one set of institutions: It's about all of the spaces that we inhabit, or would like to inhabit, if only we had the means and the freedom to do so.

And here is our second learning.

Learning # 2

Creation of a welcoming community for newcomers is the business of everyone. It will take government policies and investment, institutions that are committed and prepared to take risks together, and welcoming attitudes from citizens. Take one of these three things out, and we will not succeed. Part of our work is to help create these conditions.

Public consultations took place in 2010 followed closely by a series of meetings with key stakeholders sitting at six distinct tables: an economic table; a health and wellbeing table; an education table; a language table; a

settlement table, and a table that focused on institutions, on social and civic engagement, and on social equity.

Each table took on the task of identifying strategic priorities within its domain, followed by a series of activities for implementing those priorities. These were vetted by Council and the Ottawa Immigration Strategy left the harbour.

Since then, the five Sector Tables have been meeting regularly ... developing ideas, hustling to secure financing and implementing projects to address the gaps and challenges identified by the Strategy.

Much of this has been hands-on work and, in the process, we've learned a great deal about our capacity to work and think together and to mobilize the resources – human and financial – that must be assembled in order to make headway.

And it's from this new vantage point – economists would call this a new possibility frontier – that we would like to briefly pause, take a deep breath, and ask ourselves whether our original directions are still the ones we want to follow or whether - in light of changes in policy, in

economic context, in newcomer composition, and in self-knowledge of our capacities - we want to adjust course.

To address these questions, the OLIP sector tables have been meeting for the past several months to discuss their accomplishments and future directions.

This forum is part of that discussion. Though the perspective is somewhat different, the essential questions remain the same:

- ***Where should we direct our attention?***
- ***And where are we likely to get the best returns on our investment of time and effort?***

Corinne and Cohen have helped us understand the larger policy context, the directions in which their organizations are moving, and the interests that are at play.

Caroline and I have a more prosaic task which is to inform you about the accomplishments of the OLIP partnership over the past three years so you will have a sense of what the partnership considers important and what it's capable of achieving.

You have all reports that provide a comprehensive account of what the partnership has accomplished so what we intend to do is simply to highlight a few of the initiatives that illustrate the partnership's reach and success.

And rather than doing this outline by sector – based on our governance structure - we've chosen to loosely array these initiatives under the three pillars of the Partnership's vision: prosperity; vitality; and inclusion.

1st Pillar: Prosperity

The link between migration and prosperity has always been important. Economic success is a key measure of success in immigrants' integration and an important determinant of inclusion. For this reason, immigrants are highly motivated to find jobs quickly.

Ensuring that immigrants succeed in this search is equally important for the host population. Our selection and admissions programs are premised on the notion that newcomers make an economic contribution to the country.

Notwithstanding the importance of integration for prosperity, research has confirmed that since the 1980's, successive waves of immigrants have not had the same economic success as similarly endowed native born Canadians. Here are some of the things that the OLIP partnership is doing to improve the situation locally:

1. Two new paid internship initiatives, modeled after the successful federal internship (FIN) program are created. One is with the Ottawa Carleton District School Board; the other with the City of Ottawa. In the City case, immigrant professionals are placed as paid interns into jobs that are temporarily vacant ... they are trained ... and when the positions come up for competition, they are allowed to compete to fill the posts. If this works, an effort will be made to broaden the initiative to other sectors. In the school board case, the scope is different and includes interns for professional jobs, trades, and low skilled occupations such as janitorial positions.
2. The OLIP partnership has also been involved in redeveloping a loans program operated by the

Ottawa Community Loan Fund. It became apparent that the Fund was focused on issuing business loans whereas a lot of immigrants need education and training loans to get into the job market. The result was a new program developed by the Loan Fund in cooperation with community partners. The Loan Fund has also hired multilingual navigators to extend its reach.

On the business front, very small primer loans were introduced to meet a need for small amounts of capital ... and a pilot project is being planned around the creation of lending circles.

3. The last example under this pillar concerns a pilot project to test different ways to encourage employers to make use of Canadian language benchmarks. Benchmarks are used to assess the language competency of newcomers and to establish the language skills required for particular occupations. Employers – especially employers from small and medium-sized enterprises - tend to assess needs and proficiencies subjectively, which usually

works to the disadvantage of newcomers because of accents or intercultural difficulties.

Our Learning in the work of the OLIP partnership in immigrants' economic integration is two-fold:

Learning #3:

We have started important tracks of capacity development that will overtime help Ottawa to leverage immigrants' talent and drive to succeed. The action strategies we put in place are still new and it will take us time to have them translate into significant access to good jobs. However, we have learned that our process to the ultimate result is itself a key part of the result – in other words, these nascent strategies are helping us develop more nuanced understanding of the complex and interlocked challenges, and thus are bringing more clarity on the leadership required to help us move forward.

2nd Pillar: Vitality

In recent years, there's been a lot of attention focused on the idea that investment and skilled knowledge workers follow one another in a self-reinforcing 'virtuous' circle. Moreover, it's claimed that the cities that derive upward lift from this phenomenon are inclusive cities with diverse, highly skilled knowledge workers who are engaged and productive. Ottawa would like to present itself on the international stage as this kind of city.

The OLIP partnership has developed a number of interesting initiatives to help promote Ottawa as a welcoming and diverse city that invests in social and cultural bridging opportunities for its diverse communities. These include:

1. Welcoming Ottawa Week (WOW) which is an annual celebration of immigration and diversity intended to convey the idea that Ottawa welcomes new arrivals. Its aim is to enhance Ottawa's reputation as an attractive cosmopolitan community with an inclusive civic culture.

By design, Welcoming Ottawa Week takes place one week before Canada Day when we celebrate our collective national identity, including Canada's multiculturalism.

Welcoming Ottawa Week creates opportunities for Ottawans to connect across diversity and immigration history over knowledge sharing activities, artistic and recreational events - including music, film and performances - and dialogues and community forums that showcase our success and engage us in our challenges. Our Forum today is one of over 50 events planned in our city this week. We look forward to continued growth of the Welcoming Ottawa Week in the coming years.

2. Along the same lines, OLIP partners, under the leadership of the City of Ottawa and with funding from the provincial government, hosted a welcoming event for international students last spring. The goal is to provide students with information to connect them to local institutions and to direct those who

would like to remain in Ottawa to appropriate channels so they can get the help they need to realize their ambitions. This is part of our efforts to build local capacity to attract and retain new residents.

3. Also on the topic of attraction and reception, with the help of OLIP, Ottawa's immigration portal was extensively revised with a view to strengthening Ottawa's ability to attract and retain newcomers. The portal now offers extensive information about working, learning, and living in Ottawa along with information about why newcomers should make Ottawa their home. Given that this is a real gateway to Ottawa for prospective immigrants around the world, our next step is to enable the contribution of OLIP partners in all the sectors so that we can effectively showcase our community to potential new residents, before they arrive in Canada.
4. OLIP partners have also reached out to their counterparts in the City of Gatineau with the idea of developing a shared approach to attracting, informing,

and retaining newcomers. Ottawa and Gatineau form a single labour market and national capital region, but the jurisdictional divide is a significant impediment to strategic action. The initiative aims to achieve coordination and common purpose on the ground.

3rd Pillar: Inclusion

Immigrants are motivated by the prospects of a better life. Their hopes centre on the opportunities that are accessible to them and, more importantly, to their children. Providing access to these opportunities is one of the pillars of OLIP. For this reason, important inclusion initiatives have been developed in the areas of education, language instruction, health, as well as in the economic arena. Here are a few examples.

1. The Education Sector is working to increase parental engagement throughout the school system with a view to enhancing the academic success of immigrant children. This collaborative initiative engaged parents in all four Ottawa boards to solicit their perspectives as to what would support their

full involvement in the academic success of their children. Parental committees that advise school boards on parent engagement are now required by the Ministry of Education. So our vision is enable school boards to leverage current capacities to achieve greater impact in involving parents and consequently in student success.

2. On the language front, notwithstanding the emphasis on job-ready immigrants, there remains a significant flow of newcomers with low levels of literacy and education. Ottawa receives a disproportionate share of such flows through humanitarian and refugee admissions. The aim of this collaborative project is to chart the demand for language training by immigrants with low literacy levels and, based on the findings, to develop a specialized language training plan.
3. Moving from language to health, there is an excellent project beginning its implementation now that will establish a coordinated approach for securing language and cultural interpretation to

accompany provision of health services in three designated fields: chronic diseases, mental health, and seniors' health. The project will offer centralized telephone and face-to-face interpretation services – booked online or by telephone - to prescribed local health organizations. If successful, the approach will be extended to legal, justice and other social fields.

4. Also in the health domain, a multicultural health navigator initiative has been developed to help newcomers understand and access the health care system. The project targets specific communities and relies on trained community members, who are able to speak the languages of the targeted communities, to assist with explanations of how the system works and how to access appropriate services.
5. Mental health, as we will hear shortly, is a critical issue for many newcomers. Recently, a pilot mental health clinic was instituted in Ottawa. The clinic

offers walk-in, single session counselling, about 90 minutes in length. Services are free to users and because they don't need formal referrals, wait times are low. Multilingual counselling support is now available at three sites in Ottawa and plans are in place for a three-fold expansion. Counsellors practicing at the Clinic receive monthly training in narrative therapy from the University of Ottawa.

6. Another innovative initiative marries health promotion with language learning. Specifically, health topics have been incorporated into English language training programs for adults. Lessons cover subjects such as nutrition, dental and mental health and active living. The lessons are accessible on-line to ESL instructors and plans are being developed to extend the initiative to other areas, such as the justice arena.

There are many other examples that we can cite under each of the pillars but I think we've managed to give you

a sense of what the OLIP partnership does, what it's capable of, and what the OLIP project portfolio looks like.

You can find [comprehensive list of OLIP Partners' accomplishments](#) on our website.

For the purpose of the Later this morning we'll look forward to hearing your ideas about where the partnership should invest its resources, moving forward.

Conclusion:

The results listed above are fuelled by a strong partnership pursuing a clear and shared vision. Together, the OLIP partners have decisively moved forward on our priorities. Together, we are ready for the next 5 years.