



## Welcoming Ottawa Week June 17 to 30, 2019 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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**Q1: What is Welcoming Ottawa Week (WOW)?**

Welcoming Ottawa Week (WOW) is an annual, week-long series of dialogues, cultural and celebratory events, sports activities, documentary screenings, and other fun events. WOW is designed to convey the genuine welcome and hospitality of Ottawa residents to newcomers, while providing opportunities for quality interactions between newcomers and long-time residents.

**Q2: Why was WOW Created?**

WOW was launched in 2013 to respond to two broad priorities of [Ottawa's Immigration Strategy \(OIS\)](#)<sup>1</sup>. The first priority is to create multiple opportunities 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).

**Q3: How does WOW Address the OIS Priorities Defined Above?**

WOW embodies and brings together academically recognized elements of a welcoming city. Research shows that prospective newcomers are attracted to diverse and vibrant cities where they perceive they will have opportunities to participate, contribute and belong.

WOW is designed to serve as a showcase for Ottawa's diversity; as a magnet to attract more immigrants to the city; and as glue to promote social connection shared sense of belonging and civic pride by both newcomers and old-time residents.

Interactive, fun, and engaging events that enable participants – be they newcomers or long-term residents – to express themselves and to be exposed to cultural differences through positive experiences that may produce lasting impressions and even connections and relationships.

Variety of learning opportunities during WOW are designed to promote awareness of multiple facets of immigration and complex experiences of integration as lived both by the newcomer and by the host community.

Dialogues and community forums promote **reflection on the warmth of our welcome** to newcomers and therefore help strengthen the on-going efforts of variety of stakeholders to facilitate immigrants' integration and to make Ottawa a more welcoming city.

Awards and stories – told by newcomers - of Ottawa residents' support of newcomers' journeys to making Ottawa their home help promote welcoming attitudes by residents of all walks of life.

In short, WOW activities build connectivity, solidarity, and shared civic identity among Ottawa residents of all backgrounds. Overtime, WOW is expected to create an inclusive civic culture that engages the creativity of all residents in building a more vibrant, prosperous, and inclusive national capital.

**Q4: What happens during WOW?**

During WOW, there will be dozens of events hosted by Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership (OLIP) partners, local organizations and associations, civic groups, and businesses that are free and in many cases open for the public. The events are all listed online, at [www.olip-plio.ca](http://www.olip-plio.ca); and a print calendar will be circulated.

- **Educational Activities:** campaigns that raise awareness about newcomers' settlement, integration and contribution (including social media campaigns); learning seminars and workshops, film screenings, or book launches addressing aspects of newcomer integration in community life.
- **Community Engagement:** public forums, dialogues, town halls, workplace discussions, neighbourhood celebration of diversity, youth engagement activities, or school debates on topics related to immigration, multiculturalism, pluralism, and diversity.
- **Arts & Entertainment:** arts/photo exhibits, dance/fashion shows or poetry/music sessions showcasing artistic and intellectual contribution of immigrants and refugees or reflecting on the human experience of migration.
- **Formal Events:** leadership engagement events, events by embassies or local diplomatic core, discussing topics related to international migration and resettlement efforts, gala's that bring attention to or raise funds for humanitarian crisis in the world.
- **Sports Events:** with immigrant populations or workshops on sports favoured by many newcomers in Ottawa such as soccer, cricket, Tai Chi, yoga, etc.

WOW will be launched at an event co-hosted by OLIP and the Mayor of Ottawa on June 17. At this launch event, Welcoming Ottawa Ambassadors Awards are given to residents nominated by immigrants for being particularly welcoming. The Welcoming Ottawa Ambassador awards were introduced in 2014 and have now become a permanent feature of WOW.

**Q5: Who is involved in WOW?**

WOW was initiated and developed by OLIP; championed by the Mayor Jim Watson; and fuelled by OLIP partners, stakeholder organizations, and civic groups that host WOW events.

The number of organizations hosting WOW events has grown every year since its inception in 2013. OLIP welcomes more participation by citizens, civic groups, associations, and organizations.

Everyone is encouraged to be part of WOW by hosting an event; participating in any of the dozens of WOW events taking place in Ottawa from June 17 to 30; or simply promoting WOW in their network to help grow the movement.

**Q6: What is the Welcoming Ottawa Ambassadors initiative?**

As part of Welcoming Ottawa Week (June 17 to 30), OLIP invites foreign born residents of Ottawa to nominate someone as a Welcoming Ottawa Ambassador.

Welcoming Ottawa Ambassadors are Ottawa residents who, in interacting with immigrants or refugees, have demonstrated the human qualities of openness, positive curiosity, friendship and connection across difference that can be so enriching, but is not always there or easy to achieve in our busy lives.

Welcoming Ottawa Week Ambassadors could be a neighbour who explained where to shop or how the schools work, a colleague who answered a newcomer's questions about workplace culture, or strangers at a mosque, temple or church who reached out and became lifelong friends with newcomers.

Every year, OLIP invites foreign born Ottawa residents – who may have arrived 20 days ago or have been here for 20 years - to nominate someone who made a positive difference in their settlement and integration journey. The Welcoming Ottawa Ambassadors nomination form is available on OLIP's website. The deadline for nominations is May 1, 2019 at 5:00 p.m.

**Q7: How can one register a WOW event?**

Anyone can organize a WOW event. For an event to be a part of the Welcoming Ottawa Week, it has to meet only two conditions:

- 1) the event has to be free and inclusive of immigrants; and
- 2) the event content has to be linked to topics related to immigration, diversity, pluralism and integration.

Events that meet the above conditions can be registered online. The deadline for registration is May 17 at 5pm. If you have an idea for a WOW event and would like clarifications and support, please contact Nyamulola Kambanji at [nyamulola@olip-plio.ca](mailto:nyamulola@olip-plio.ca).

**Q8: What support is provided by OLIP to WOW event hosts?**

OLIP:

- provides simple ideas on types of WOW events/activities that organizations may consider hosting;
- distributes digital assets for promoting individual WOW events, these include bilingual WOW logos, posters and photos;
- promotes registered WOW events via our communication channels (website, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube);
- hosts the WOW launch event, in collaboration with the City of Ottawa to kick-start the week-long events and activities;
- manages the Welcoming Ottawa Ambassadors program, which recognizes individuals nominated by immigrants as being supportive of immigrants' integration process; and

- hosts a blog for WOW event hosts to post their reflections and summaries of their events.

**Q9: How has the Mayor championed WOW?**

In June 2013, the Mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson, proclaimed the last week of June of every year as WOW, 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, have settled in our city to raise families and contribute to Ottawa's quality of life and civic identity. Moreover, the Mayor brought attention the fact that for Ottawa to be viable, it needs to continue attracting immigrants from all over the world.

The proclamation of WOW by the Mayor of Ottawa has both symbolic and practical value. 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 WOW carries a strong message to both current and prospective immigrants that Ottawa respects the human journey of new immigrants to begin another life in a new community and is supportive of their settlement and integration.

**Q10: How exactly does WOW help to 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 without community support and engagement, immigrants may feel marginalized.

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

Fortunately, many Ottawa residents value and welcome immigrants and assist them daily in their integration process. This support may not be all too visible to newcomers who are focused on overcoming the many challenges of integration.

Our goal with WOW is twofold: to create more opportunities for Ottawa residents to convey their genuine respect and welcome and to encourage many more Ottawa residents and organizations to join the chorus of the many ways to welcome newcomers. During WOW, the following objectives are realized:

- create new champions that advance the goals of WOW and to add more value and impact towards Ottawa's success in attracting and integrating immigrants;
- 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; and
- sustain Ottawa's reputation at the national and international levels as an attractive, cosmopolitan city where diversity thrives and newcomers are welcomed.

**Q11: How will it be known if Ottawa is in fact a Welcoming City?**

Three broad categories of indicators will tell about Ottawa's growth as a welcoming city:

- 1) effective government investments and policies;
- 2) community vision and local institutions that are proactively planning for ways to improve immigrants' integration outcomes; and
- 3) residents' welcoming attitudes.

Combined, these three categories of improvements will translate into easier integration for Immigrants over time.

**Q12: How many Immigrants does Ottawa receive every year?**

Ottawa receives about 12,000 newcomers every year, split equally between permanent residents and temporary residents. The latter category includes international students, temporary foreign workers, refugee claimants and humanitarian admissions.

**Q13: How does this compare with other Canadian cities?**

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

**Q14: Why is welcoming newcomers important?**

Newcomers are essential for Ottawa's future prosperity, growth and social 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 benefits, there is universal agreement that Ottawa residents want to live in an inclusive and unified city.

Ottawa has a great reputation as a city that is hospitable to newcomers. It is one of six cities in the country receiving top marks for attracting newcomers, according to a Conference Board of Canada report released in 2014. The City of Ottawa was also ranked the best place to live in Canada by *MoneySense Magazine* in 2016.

This reputation came to life last year when the Ottawa community rallied together to welcome Syrian refugees. It has also emerged every year since 2013 during Welcoming Ottawa Week, when local groups and organizations have joined efforts to showcase their genuine welcome and respect to newcomers by hosting a series of fun and engaging events and activities.

**For more information on WOW, please contact:**

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