



2nd Annual Ottawa Immigration Forum Thursday June 27, 2013 | 8am-12noon

OLIP's Progress Report by Dick Stewart and Salimatou Diallo Speaking Notes

Good Morning ladies and gentlemen

It gives us a great pleasure to address you today, at the 2nd Annual Ottawa Immigration Forum. It is good to see so many of you here ... which is a sign both of our progress and of how we got here ... by working together.

Our objective today is to talk to you about the progress that we - the OLIP partners – have made since last year's Immigration Forum, which was held in the Fall.

But before we do that, I'd like to step back for a moment and remind those of you who are new to the Forum, and to OLIP, of what we're trying to accomplish on behalf of – and with the help of – the Ottawa community. To do this, we will say a few words about our goals and how we've progressed since our start.

We will go over our mandate and accountability; and offer a short history of OLIP's progress and achievements. These are largely due to our partners, and we'll be saying something about their role in OLIP's success, before concluding with the follow-on steps towards our vision

Our mandate and accountability

Our mandate is to strengthen Ottawa's capacity to attract, settle, and integrate immigrants. Something we'll hear a lot more about later today.

How do we do that?

We do it by engaging the key institutions in our community and making sure that there exists a shared strategic vision, with clear priorities that everyone can work towards, in six critical areas: settlement, language, education, economic integration, health and wellbeing, and community and institutional capacity development

We also work to develop a shared awareness and understanding among our partners. We believe strongly that shared understanding is the basis for collaboration which can't be compelled ... it must be embarked on voluntarily.

Our history in context

For those of you who are new, OLIP is about four years old, having begun as a collaborative community initiative funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and brought to life by our founding partners: LASI (local agencies serving immigrants) and the City of Ottawa.

In 2011, after extensive consultations which saw many local institutions play a leadership role, OLIP put together a long-term strategy and accompanying action plan for the Ottawa community. The Strategy engages a range of local stakeholders, across multiple sectors.

Since then, the OLIP partners have been working hard to implement a range of measures designed to improve Ottawa's welcome to a growing number of newcomers who are intent on making Ottawa their home.

More than 40,000 newcomers – a quarter of them students - have come to Ottawa since the inception of OLIP in 2009, so there is clearly an important job to be done.

The Ottawa Immigration Forum is part of the OLIP process. It is an opportunity for stakeholders to reflect on the integration of immigrants, on Ottawa's efforts to create a welcoming environment, and to discuss new ideas and directions. Its value was established last year and it was popular enough to become an annual event.

What's especially exciting this year is the launch of the [Welcoming Ottawa Week](#), significantly positioned just before Canada Day.

Our progress and why it matters

For Ottawa to thrive, the local community will need to reach out and actively persuade talented newcomers to come to the city and to stay on. They will also need to be given good reasons for remaining in the city.

... Without new arrivals, local labour markets will soon shrink and population growth will stagnate.

Building local capacity to attract immigrants

.... Welcoming immigrants requires the efforts of multiple stakeholders in all sectors of our community. We duly recognize the importance of extending a genuine and visible welcome to new immigrants. We have acted on a number of fronts in this regard. A significant effort is exerted by the City Ottawa to redevelop its municipal immigration portal – Ontario's Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, local settlement SPOs, and our local higher education institutions supported the City's efforts.

... Similarly, our work in launching the Welcoming Ottawa Week, and the leadership provided the City and the Mayor of Ottawa in proclaiming WOW are testament to our partners' commitment to enhance our capacity to attract newcomers.

.....This very moment -- and the theme we are discussing ---carries in itself our partners' interest and determination to reflect on the warmth of our welcome to newcomers.

Enabling Immigrants' Greater Access to Economic Opportunities

It is difficult to talk about a welcoming community when immigrants are encountering formidable challenges in accessing employment and economic opportunities.

In addition to offering many important supports both to immigrants and to employers, our partners continue to innovate our work in this area.

.....The launch of the Annual Immigrant Entrepreneurship Awards by the City of Ottawa, last year was acclaimed both by immigrants and the business community. A 2nd edition of the

Awards is forthcoming this fall. The successes of the Immigrant Entrepreneurship Awards reflect the importance of recognition. Our recognition of the drive immigrants bring; their tireless efforts as they seek to re-establish their lives in our community. One nominee to the Immigrant Entrepreneurship Awards put it cogently, when he said: *“My nomination is an indication that our hard work in building Canada is recognized. All we do is to serve the community in return for embracing us when we needed it.”*

.... Of course, recognition must be complemented with solutions that target tangible results. Access to microloans for entrepreneurs will leverage immigrants’ entrepreneurship drive; and term internships designed exclusively for immigrants will open doors for immigrants to access municipal employment opportunities.

Building capacity to improve health maintenance among immigrants

Health maintenance and access to health services is of critical importance to immigrants and their families. Researchers have noted critical health deterioration among immigrants overtime – no doubt the result of challenges in adaptation to healthy life-style to prevent diseases, but also challenges in navigating the health system to locate and access health services.

The OLIP partners in the Health and Wellbeing sector, and Language sector (yes, language!) are putting in place the beginning of innovative solutions to improve immigrants’ health outcomes, and to reduce the cost associated with un-necessary visits to the emergency, after the advent of critical diseases such as diabetes, heart diseases and loss of mental health.

Our partners are working to put in place a team of multicultural health brokers to facilitate access and health system navigation. And language instruction lesson plans are being modified to include healthy living tips and ideas. Immigrants can now practice their English and French, while they learn about local food, diet and exercise.

Building capacity to work together

Over the last year and a half, collaboration has been strengthened in a number of key areas:

Closer links have been built between OLIP and the Réseau de Soutien de l'immigration Francophone ... As well as with local Francophone institutions....

This is essential because of Ottawa's status as a bilingual city and the presence of bilingual institutions. The options afforded by our partners for immigrants to settle and integrate in the two official languages makes our city a preferred destination for secondary Francophone migrants from Gatineau and elsewhere in the country.

Another area that will produce benefits down the road concerns the closer ties that OLIP has formed with academic researchers and research groups, including the panCanadian Pathways to Prosperity Partnership and the Diversity and Equity Research Group, an interdisciplinary team of University of Ottawa researchers interested in the analysis of multiple dimensions of equity and inclusion. These relationships are useful for shaping and consolidating our shared awareness.

Our success is our people... our partners.... our institutions

I'd like to borrow a line from Dofasco, a Hamilton-based steel producer that for a long time advertised itself under the slogan "Our product is steel. Our strength is people."

For Ottawa to successfully compete and attract talented newcomers and their families, we will require a sustained team effort. The logos in the slide are testament to the range of institutions that constitute the OLIP Council. Our partners contribute to this effort because of their vision and commitment to Ottawa's future as a truly cosmopolitan, welcoming city that is a great place to live, work and raise one's family.

Our vision and next steps towards it

Our recipe for the future builds on OLIP's past success in mobilizing stakeholders and creating opportunities for local institutions and local communities to work together.

Our shared vision is intact and its relevance becomes more obvious and critical as we delve into the work. The OLIP partners are engaged to strengthen Ottawa's prosperity, vibrancy, and inclusivity.

As we come to know each other, to trust our respective abilities and to have confidence in our commitment to the process, new possibilities continue to present themselves.

As we act on these possibilities and chart our future plans, we also intend to consolidate the work we began on key enablers of our success: the cultivation of equitable and inclusive organizations and uniting the voices of Ottawans in welcoming newcomers. In this area, we continue to be guided by our shared values of hospitality, fairness and inclusivity.

...We will also not lose sight of the imperative to "oiling" our machinery. We will be vigilant and we will learn through action. We will make sure that we strengthen the ties that bind us.

...Our strength is our partnership ... and will not forget it.