



# **OTTAWA IMMIGRATION STRATEGY**

## **PHASE TWO**

**Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership**

**June 2016**

# INDEX

	Page
Foreword	3
Overview	4
▪ Scope and Reasons for Refreshing the Ottawa Immigration Strategy (OIS)	4
▪ Context and Changing Environment	5
➤ Ottawa Immigration Patterns	5
➤ Fiscal & Economic Environment	6
➤ Policy Context	8
▪ Overarching Accomplishments and Evolving Strengths	10
➤ Individual Outcomes & Organizational Capacities	10
➤ OLIP “Machinery” Improvements	12
▪ Methodology for Refreshing the Ottawa Immigration Strategy	14
▪ Shared Vision & List of Refreshed Priorities	16
Ottawa Immigration Strategy: Current Actions and Future Plans	
▪ Health and Wellbeing	18
▪ Economic Integration	29
▪ Education	37
▪ Language Training & Interpretation	43
▪ Settlement & Civic Integration	TBC

# Foreword

The Ottawa Immigration Strategy (OIS) can be viewed as a vision, framework and roadmap for producing a more welcoming city ... a city that values diversity, deploying its talents and resources to welcome and integrate newcomers. Given the scope of the task, an effective machinery and great many mechanics have been needed to mobilize the leadership, knowledge and resources of partners operating in multiple sectors. The partners have done this not only on behalf of their institutions, but voluntarily, because it reflects their personal vision of the city they want to live in. The Ottawa Immigration Strategy is a testimony to their collective efforts. Thanks are due the following groups:

- The five Sector Tables: (a) The Health and Wellbeing Sector Table; (b) the Education Sector Table; (c) the Economic Sector Table; (d) the Language Sector Table; and (e) the Settlement & Socio-Civic Integration Sector Table
- The Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership Council
- The Ottawa Local Immigration Executive Committee
- The Equity Project partners
- Special thanks is also due the City of Ottawa, including the Mayor, City Councillors, and City Staff whose support has been unwavering and extraordinarily generous
- Equally, LASI (Local Agencies Supporting Immigrants) has supported the OIS in multiple capacities, participating in a majority of the projects and innovations emerging from the Sector Tables.
- Finally, thanks are due the many funders and contributors to the OIS. Special recognition goes to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the City of Ottawa, Immigration, Citizenship and International Trade (MCIIT), the Champlain Local Health Integration Network, the Community Foundation of Ottawa, the United Way / Centraide Ottawa, and the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

# Overview

## Scope and Reasons for Refreshing the Ottawa Immigration Strategy

The Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership (OLIP) was created in 2009 by the City of Ottawa and LASI (Local Agencies Serving Immigrants). After extensive consultations involving numerous Ottawa-based institutions and stakeholders, the Ottawa Immigration Strategy (OIS) was released in June 2011. At the same time, a machinery was introduced for thinking, for devising plans and activities, and for exercising stewardship over the OIS.

By any measure, the Ottawa Immigration Strategy has been a major success: innovative projects are underway; local stakeholders are engaged and contributing; immigrants and refugees are benefitting; and a spirit of collaboration, learning, and excitement pervades the enterprise. Given this success, OLIP's Council and Executive Committee did not see the need to initiate a wholesale review of the project. Instead, the governing bodies opted for a more limited recalibration of the project so it is better able to respond to environmental changes, expanded stakeholder capacities, and knowledge gleaned from five years of activity. The reasons for tweaking the Ottawa immigration strategy are set out below:

1. Since 2011, there have been significant shifts in Ottawa's economy, in federal and provincial fiscal capacities, in newcomer admission and settlement policies, and in the institutions implicated in recruiting and welcoming newcomers. These shifts have altered the opportunities and challenges confronting the Ottawa partnership, making it necessary to adjust the project's focus and activities.
2. Since the introduction of the original OIS, a significant number of promising practices have emerged along with information about their potential for up-scaling and transfer to other, related areas of practice. Many of these innovations are local in origin, but interesting practices have also been developed by other LIPs across the country. The OIS refreshment will allow OLIP to take advantage of these 'experiments' in designing - or re-designing – Ottawa-based initiatives.
3. Five years of strategizing, planning, and implementing shared endeavors have enhanced the ability of OLIP institutions to think and work together. Participants have acquired new sources of information; they have learned about the capabilities and networks of their partners ... and how to access these assets; and they have learned to trust each other. In short, OLIP has generated social capital. The OIS refreshment affords the

partnership an opportunity to reappraise how best to utilize its new collaborative capacities.

4. The formation of OLIP partnerships – both within and across sectors - coupled with the introduction of innovative approaches to delivering services and conveying information have revealed potential synergies in several areas of practice. Refreshing the OIS allows OLIP to focus on these synergies and to marshal support for acting on the opportunities they represent.

The balance of this overview discusses the environmental changes that will need to be taken into account in the refreshment of the OIS; it describes OLIP's overarching accomplishments and evolving strengths; and it presents the challenges that OLIP faces in the pursuit of its strategic agenda. These factors - changes in the environment, challenges, and new capacities - provide both the context and rationale for the revised directions and plans that have been advanced by the Sector Tables and the OLIP Secretariat.

## Context and Changing Environment

### **Immigration patterns**

Ottawa attracts roughly 12,000 new arrivals from abroad each year, split equally between immigrants and entrants without permanent status – students, temporary foreign workers, and refugee claimants. There is a fair degree of variability in the annual flows. The city also receives significant numbers of secondary migrants, newcomers who landed elsewhere before coming to Ottawa. Incoming migrants – the main sources being Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Gatineau - outweigh migrant departures.

Ottawa's share of new immigrants has remained relatively flat over the years. This contrasts with other Canadian cities of similar size. Edmonton, Calgary and Winnipeg have all increased the proportion of immigrants they attract, over comparable timeframes. Moreover, while retention is fairly high for most cities, Ottawa's retention rate has lagged that of other centres. This underperformance matters because immigration has become the major source of labour force growth for Ottawa, thus coupling the city's economic expansion to its success in attracting, integrating, and retaining newcomers.

Below are a number of salient facts pertaining to Ottawa's migrant intake:

- The proportion of Ottawa immigrants being admitted in the economic class has been declining. This mirrors a pattern for Ontario as a whole. The largest intake occurs in the family class. Further amplifying the paucity of economic class immigrants is the fact that

while they make up 25-36% of new entrants to the city, they account for between 38% and 44% of all emigrants (based on an analysis of the 2010-12 entry cohort).

- Ottawa also receives a relatively large number of refugees, accounting for roughly one-quarter of total immigrant intake. This proportion was growing, even before the recent influx of Syrian refugees. Importantly, Francophones have constituted a growing share of the refugee population.
- Generally, the proportion of Francophone newcomers to Ottawa has been rising. The size and visibility of this population has been amplified by the fact that many Gatineau immigrants work in Ottawa.
- English is the official language spoken by a majority of new arrivals, although the proportion of French speakers has increased. Refugees are more likely than other groups to speak neither French nor English.
- The majority of Ottawa's immigrants are female with the largest proportion falling in the 25-34 age group. This is consistent with Ottawa's bias towards family class immigration.
- The proportion of older immigrants coming to Ottawa has also been rising.
- The majority of immigrants arriving in Ottawa are well educated, having at least some post-secondary education.
- Reflecting their elevated qualifications, Ottawa immigrants earn higher median incomes than immigrants in other parts of Ontario. At the same time, their self-employment rate is lower than the Ontario average. Investment income and capital gains are roughly the same across Ontario.
- Ottawa also receives approximately 3,000 students annually. Three-quarters of these students attend universities or colleges and roughly half intend to remain in Canada.
- Both economic immigrants and students are relatively concentrated in terms of their source countries. The top six source countries for economic immigrants account for well over fifty percent of the total inflow (of economic immigrants), while for students the top six countries account for more than sixty percent of intake. There is a degree of overlap between immigrant sending and student sending sources, with China and India falling into the top six of each group.

## **Economic and fiscal environment**

Economic and fiscal factors will continue to pose challenges over the life of the Ottawa Immigration Strategy, impacting newcomer labour market integration, business opportunities, and settlement services.

On the job front, Ottawa's unemployment has increased over the course of 2016, although it still lies below the national average. Younger people, especially, are experiencing higher rates. Typically, rising unemployment disproportionately impacts new entrants to the labour market, including immigrants. A mild reduction in unemployment is forecast for 2017, however, there is considerable uncertainty in the economic projections, a result of fluctuating oil prices, uncertainties in the global political economy (the U.S. election, the fate of the EU, and the status of China's recovery), and the effects of federal public infrastructure spending which will inject some six billion dollars into the national economy.

In terms of labour demand, Ottawa's job market has remained relatively flat in recent years as declines in federal employment – which accounts for one in three jobs – have been offset by advances elsewhere, including the information and communications technology sector which has been growing at some ten per cent annually. Other sources of local growth have been in the health, education, and trade arenas, as well as tourism which has expanded due to the weaker Canadian dollar.

While the shift in Ottawa's employment base may appear to be neutral, it is not benign. The expanding sectors will need to become more adept at recruiting and integrating newcomers, if only to maintain the status quo. Continuing to provide expertise and settlement services to assist in this transformation of the employment base is a significant task, especially as employment shifts to smaller firms that lack the human resource assets of the federal government.

Over and above the challenges produced by Ottawa's shifting employment base is the stark fact that both the federal and provincial governments are running deficits and are unlikely to increase funding for settlement, apart from special accommodations to deal with temporary situations, such as the resettlement of Syrian refugees. Ontario faces additional difficulties. The incoming federal government has retained the settlement distribution formula used by its predecessors. This has resulted in a substantial reassignment of settlement funds away from Ontario, towards Western Canada. The reallocation, which is driven by falling immigration numbers for Ontario as a whole, has had an especially deleterious effect on Ottawa where settlement funding has fallen but immigrant numbers have not declined as occurred in Toronto.

For Ontario as a whole, in 2016, the support made available for Syrian refugees by both the federal and provincial governments exactly offsets the overall reduction in federal settlement funding; however, it is important to bear in mind that the substitution of refugees for economic and family class immigrants will significantly increase the need for assistance. This suggests that both specialized immigrant serving agencies and other OLIP stakeholders will find themselves being squeezed over the period of the revised OIS to do more with what is currently on offer. In particular, settlement agencies will be called upon to deal with more complex cases, without

the benefit of additional resources, at the same time as deficits place other stakeholders, such as school boards and health organizations, under pressure to concentrate on their core and current work. This can be expected to test the strength of the OLIP coalition, focussing attention on mainstreaming programs, generating efficiencies, and exploiting synergies.

## **Policy context**

The emerging settlement policy regime, like the fiscal picture, is marked by uncertainty as the new government takes stock of the changes introduced by the previous administration and decides what course to follow. The previous government, during its last mandate, made extensive changes affecting the structure, financing, and management of admission policies and settlement programs. Especially noteworthy were measures to curtail family class immigration and promote skilled workers. The latter policy focused on changing the characteristics of new immigrant recruits – enhancing language skills and upgrading other selection criteria – as well as assigning a larger, determining role to employers within the selection process. The aim was to shift from a generalized human capital approach that emphasized labour mobility, to a targeted selection program that addressed specific gaps in labour supply. As a consequence, the need for settlement assistance was anticipated to fall, since newcomers would have jobs immediately upon entry and would not require the same degree of support.

There is also uncertainty regarding the previous government's policies for admitting temporary workers and international students. The latter were relatively uncontroversial but the temporary worker policies met stiff public resistance following a period of hyper-expansion marked by increasing reports of Canadians being displaced from their jobs. This led to a series of retractions and adjustments that caused the program to implode shortly before the election. The new government has by and large retained the restrictions but has relaxed controls for industries that depend on short-term migrant labour. A more generalized policy awaits. On the international student front, the most noteworthy element is the intended scale of student recruitment, much of it in the hands of colleges and universities. The aim was to admit nearly half a million students by 2020, most of them from China, India, Brazil, Mexico, North Africa and the Middle East, and Vietnam.

Accompanying the growth of temporary migrants was an increased reliance on measures allowing applicants to convert their temporary status to permanent residence. The measures targeted students who had acquired a graduate degree in Canada and highly skilled workers who could be fast-tracked into Canada - bypassing the slower immigration system – and then have their status revised once they were inside the country.

The extensive changes in admission policies had a significant impact on the requirements and accessibility of settlement assistance. In particular, the changing proportions of economic and



family class immigrants and refugees affected the type and volume of services that were needed. As well, the increased reliance on temporary workers generated a large population of newcomers who were not eligible for federal settlement assistance, even though they drew on local and provincial support in the form of health, justice, housing and educational services.

The delivery system was also affected at a structural level. Settlement funding priorities were shifted to favour the provision of pre-arrival services in place of domestic assistance. Other measures by the former government included a curtailment of the Interim Federal Health Program - which offered limited, temporary assistance to refugees and refugee claimants - and elimination of the Host Program which offered informal, private help to refugees.

In order to anticipate future settlement requirements, it is necessary to form a view about the policy directions that the current government is likely to adopt, including which measures (by the former government) it will retain and which it will reverse or re-engineer. The following assumptions inform OLIP's refreshed immigration strategy:

- While the express entry system may be tweaked to address a broader range of policy objectives – such as regional immigration needs or Francophone immigration – its essential structure and revised selection characteristics will be retained. The balance among categories, while still favoring economic immigration, will likely be adjusted to increase the proportion of refugees and family class.
- While the new government has elected to double, to 10,000 per year, the number of parents and grandparents, it is unlikely to abandon the controlled management of family class entries and revert to an earlier system of visas on demand. That said, the combination of higher quotas with measures to facilitate the entry of siblings and raise the maximum age for sponsored dependents will increase the need for support directed to both sponsors and family entrants.
- Sustained increases in refugee intake will depend on the persistence of public compassion and continued interest in private sponsorship or other forms of private involvement in refugee resettlement. Should this occur, it would be abetted by a more favourable government disposition towards refugees, as signaled through measures such as the reversal of cuts to medical and other services. Major changes in government sponsored refugee intake are unlikely given the government's fiscal position and the fact that refugees require extensive support, including immediate settlement assistance, as well as longer-term, more complex economic, health, and social services. There will also be an ongoing need to address the downstream requirements of the 2016 Syrian refugee 'bulge'.

- Some rebalancing, in the form of an easing of restrictions, can be expected with regard to foreign workers and international students. This will be accompanied by the increased use of domestic pathways to regularize the status of temporary entrants, including both workers and students. As noted above, temporary entrants are ineligible for federal settlement assistance; however, they do require help and tend to encumber settlement agencies. They also access other forms of public assistance, such as medical and justice services.
- At the provincial level, there is not expected to be a substantial change in current policy directions or expenditure levels, which were increased in 2015. An additional two-year allotment has been made available to help settle Syrian refugees, but this will expire in 2018.
- The province is expected to continue to pursue economic immigrants under the Provincial Nominee Program and other elective programs that focus on business and skilled worker immigration, as well as international students. The expansion of these programs is controlled by the federal government and a substantial change in allocation seems unlikely. Ontario has signaled that it will continue to tightly manage these intakes in accordance with federal admission targets.

## Overarching Accomplishments and Evolving Strengths

OLIP's success can be observed along two axes: the first concerns changes in the ability of individuals and the organizations that serve them to improve integration outcomes; the second involves changes in the capacity of the OLIP organization – the Sector Tables and Secretariat - to effect these organizational and individual improvements. The achievements associated with each axis are discussed below.

### **Improved Individual Outcomes and Organizational Capacities**

Validation of OLIP's success was determined through a mixed methods approach that involved special facilitated meetings of the Sector Tables, an electronic survey of project leaders, and follow-up interviews with partners. The assessment also drew on research initiatives that included Ottawa in their sample frame. The results confirm that significant gains were made in: (a) providing information to newcomers; (b) improving newcomer access to important services; (c) increasing the sensitivity of organizations to newcomer needs, as well as improving and extending their services and inducing them to engage newcomers; (d) improving the alignment between the OIS and other institutional strategies; and (e) improving the public welcome accorded to newcomers

Evaluation studies have shown that a significant proportion of newcomers do not take advantage of the assistance that is on offer because they are unaware of the services or confused about how to avail themselves of help. For this reason, enhancing newcomer and community awareness of services is critical for improving integration outcomes.

OLIP has invested considerable effort in improving service access and uptake. Innovative projects to promote important services have incorporated the use of town hall meetings, community liaison agents, and community leaders to convey information and to draw attention to services. Examples of successful strategies can be found in projects to promote screening for chronic diseases, such as diabetes, or to increase parental involvement in the development of school programs and curricula. As well, critical information has been bundled into essential services, notably, the insertion of health and nutritional information into ESL and FSL training programs. These measures were well received and judged to have been effective.

Newcomer access to services has also been enhanced by sensitizing organizations to the need for specialized, adapted programming and by introducing supportive interventions, such as cultural sensitivity training for staff and the provision of interpreter services for newcomers. The Ottawa Equity Project, the Language Access Program, and Cultural Sensitivity Training for Medical Practitioners offer successful examples of this approach to developing organizational capacity.

OLIP has also made considerable headway in elevating the importance that key organizations assign to engaging newcomers and addressing their needs. This has manifested itself in terms of new services, new approaches to immigrant workforce recruitment, increased expenditure on newcomer services, and realignments in the strategic and operational plans of mainstream organizations so they better support the priorities and directions of the OIS. Strong, innovative examples of these improvements can be found in the success of the walk-in, mental health clinic, or in the provision of training loans to newcomers. Similarly, programs offering immigrants paid internships at the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Carleton District School Board are piloting new approaches to immigrant recruitment and job entry.

Improving the alignment between the strategic plans and priorities of mainstream institutions with the plans and priorities set out in the OIS constitutes one of OLIP's most important and durable achievements. The most noteworthy successes to date have involved the City of Ottawa's Municipal Immigration Strategy and the operational strategy of the Champlain Local Health Integration Network (LHIN). In both instances, substantial resources were leveraged, including staff time and expertise. As a result, programming and services for newcomers have significantly improved.

Lastly, OLIP has made considerable headway in drawing attention to newcomer concerns and improving the overall welcome accorded to immigrants and refugees. Welcoming Ottawa Week, the Immigration Forum, the Entrepreneurial Awards, and the Welcoming Ottawans Award and events to promote international student involvement have attracted a great deal of positive attention from the public at large, from the corporate and voluntary sectors, and from local media. Welcoming Ottawa Week, in particular, has expanded enormously and shows tremendous potential.

## OLIP “machinery” improvements

OLIP is not a program in the conventional sense of delivering services or purchasing benefits on behalf of newcomers. Instead, OLIP is a catalyst for building capacity among local and regional institutions for the purpose of accelerating newcomer integration and producing a more welcoming environment. Fundamentally, OLIP is a partnership; a collective of some sixty organizations that operate in different spheres, with different mandates, different timetables and priorities, and non-synchronous geographic boundaries and target groups. What unites the partnership is a shared interest in improving newcomer integration and boosting local receptivity.

Operationalizing this shared interest requires a machinery for effecting and steering collective action and building an intellectual consensus. The machinery for accomplishing these tasks is OLIP, including the Secretariat, the Sector Tables, and the other governance tables. As the capacities of this architecture expands, so too do the initiative’s opportunity frontiers, making it possible for partner institutions to embark on new and more ambitious collaborative projects. Because of this, there is a collective interest in growing OLIP and strengthening its capacities.

OLIP has successfully created an ...

- ❖ ... enhanced capacity to mobilize key institutions and enlist their support for measures to improve newcomer integration and receptivity. This is especially apparent in the health, economic, and education fields.
- ❖ ... enhanced capacity to assemble key institutions and leaders for the purpose of planning and delivering assistance in complex situations that require in-depth community involvement. Ottawa’s response to the Syrian refugee crisis benefitted from OLIP’s networks and the trust that had developed through planning and working together.
- ❖ ... enhanced ability to engage Ottawa’s leadership cadre in championing OLIP initiatives. This is evident in the membership of the Sector Tables and the willingness

of the Mayor and Deputy-Mayor to champion events and award ceremonies, such as Welcoming Ottawa Week, the Welcoming Ottawan Awards, and the Immigrant Entrepreneurship Awards. Senior municipal officials and organizational leaders from the voluntary sector and from quasi-public institutions - in the health, education, economic, and settlement arenas - are deeply involved in OLIP governance, planning and project development.

- ❖ ... enhanced capacity to leverage financial and in-kind support for OLIP projects and initiatives. OLIP has successfully leveraged municipal and sectoral resources from the health, education, economic, language, and settlement sectors in order to develop and implement new initiatives and, to a lesser extent, to undertake analytic, evaluative, and learning activities.
- ❖ ... enhanced capacity to convene organizations and to promote *inter-sectoral* collaboration involving information sharing, service coordination, planning, priority setting, and project development. OLIP works especially well where potential synergies can be realized through inter-sectoral collaboration.
- ❖ ... improved governance capacity, including an ability to act strategically and to animate numerous structures and processes that require frequent strategic and operational meetings, documentation and dissemination of decisions, and communication of achievements and learnings.
- ❖ ... enhanced capacity to measure, analyze and learn through informal exchanges within and across sector tables, as well as formally through research and evaluative studies. OLIP is designed to promote experimentation, information sharing, learning, and knowledge exchange, including the exchange of information about promising practices.

# Methodology for Refreshing the OIS

In early 2015, OLIP initiated a **three phase process** to review and update the Ottawa Immigration Strategy (OIS), originally launched in 2011.

**Phase One** of the review focused on taking stock of accomplishments and potential, future opportunities, as viewed from the perspective of the Sector Tables. The Sector Tables are responsible for planning interventions, coordinating stakeholder participation, developing projects, obtaining resources, and implementing measures to enhance integration, receptivity, and the capacity of institutions engaged in these tasks. The five Tables are: (a) the Health and Wellbeing Sector; (b) the Economic Sector; (c) the Education Sector; (d) the Language Sector; and (e) the Settlement and Civic Integration Sector.

To carry out the review, a multi-methods approach was devised by OLIP's Secretariat, working in collaboration with the Executive Committee. The approach had four components: (1) an initial documentary review; (2) a series of half-day, facilitated meetings with each of the Sector Tables; (3) an electronic survey directed to the leaders of sector initiatives; and (4) follow-up interviews with key partners. From this emerged a critical, and nuanced, description of OLIP Sector Table accomplishments and aspirations.

**Phase Two** centred on determining the scale of the refreshment of the OIS to be pursued. The OLIP Executive Committee & the Secretariat recommended two options to the OLIP Council: (1) mounting a new planning process that would develop new priorities; or (2) building on and maintaining momentum on on-going work; and maintaining the current scope of the OIS. For what is beyond the scope of the OIS, this option also called for linking OLIP's work with that of key organizations leading areas that are important to the settlement and integration of immigrants – such as housing, justice, and culture. The Council endorsed the second recommendation and contributed useful advice for strengthening community connections and enhancing the overall coherence of the OIS.

**Phase Three** - With Council's endorsement in hand, the OLIP Secretariat embarked on the final phase of the review to produce a refreshed Ottawa Immigration Strategy and action plan. Phase Three was operationalized through a series of meetings involving each of the Sector Tables and the Secretariat. (The Settlement and Civic Integration Sector Table will follow a different trajectory.) The meetings discussed changes in OLIP's environment; assessed current priorities from the perspective of keeping, modifying, removing, or adding priorities; took stock of accomplishments; and advanced ideas for future actions to address newly refreshed priorities. Based on this, revised strategies and plans were prepared for each of the Sector Tables. These are set out below.

The final stage of Phase Three will be to obtain the endorsement and advice of OLIP Council for the directions and proposals developed by the Sector Tables and Secretariat. This will be initiated at Council's June 9<sup>th</sup> 2106 meeting.

# Vision

Partners' Shared Vision is to work together across jurisdictions to build a vibrant, prosperous, and inclusive national capital, strengthened by the contribution of immigrants.

- A prosperous city attained through greater participation of immigrants in Ottawa's economy and labour market
- A vibrant city achieved through diverse and cohesive cultural, intellectual, and civic perspectives
- An inclusive national capital that upholds our tradition of public service and the Canadian values of multiculturalism and bilingualism.

## List of Refreshed Priorities

### Health & Wellbeing

- 1) To improve newcomers' access to health care, including preventive services, primary health care, and dental services
- 2) To improve newcomers' access to mental health care, though preventive services, mental health promotion, training of counselors, and trauma counseling
- 3) To enhance health literacy among immigrants and refugees, and to build capacity to support this goal
- 4) To enhance intercultural competencies, diversity, and other related capacities among health care providers, as well as promoting the hiring and retention of racialized medical professionals and lay health workers
- 5) To elevate the importance that health organizations attach to the provision of immigrant and refugee health services and to improve service coordination by agencies
- 6) To improve the quality and accessibility of local health care data bearing on the health and service outcomes of newcomers, and to stimulate related research

### Economic Integration

- 1) To extend and improve the strategic alignment among institutions and initiatives concerned with newcomer economic integration
- 2) To help immigrants navigate towards employment opportunities in a changing labour environment
- 3) To reduce barriers that impede small and medium-sized enterprises from hiring immigrants



- 4) To promote and support entrepreneurship among Ottawa newcomers
- 5) To enhance Ottawa's ability to recruit newcomers by projecting itself, and the national capital region, as a diverse, world-class capital that welcomes skilled immigrants and international students
- 6) To clarify misconceptions and myths about immigrant capabilities and contributions in order to improve receptivity

## Education

- 1) To improve the cultural competencies of teachers and staff as well as the "fit" between schools, teachers, immigrant students and communities, particularly in neighbourhoods with high immigrant concentrations
- 2) To work with schools to foster greater involvement by immigrant parents in school activities, in student academic participation, and in school governance
- 3) To build trust among schools, immigrant students and minority communities, raising awareness of newcomer educational successes, and promoting a shared understanding of newcomer educational challenges and solution pathways
- 4) To develop neighbourhood and school catchment area plans that complement and support school boards' mandates
- 5) To build evidence regarding the challenges that exist in neighborhoods with high concentrations of immigrants and to create multi-sectoral partnerships in support of students' academic success

## Language

- 1) To further improve the planning, deployment and quality of federal and provincial language courses so they are complementary and better matched to the needs of Francophone and Anglophone immigrants
- 2) To improve newcomer access to specialized language training that supports broader community and learner needs;
- 3) To improve, raise awareness of and extend access to interpretation services for a broad range of legal, justice, health and social related services
- 4) To promote special language programming for populations at risk of exclusion and ensure language instructors are sensitive to the complex challenges faced by this category of learners
- 5) To strengthen the capacity of Ottawa language training providers to advocate for improvements in language training, including additional training options, such as on-the-job language training

# Ottawa Immigration Strategy: Current Actions & Future Plans

## Health and Wellbeing Sector Table

---

### **Strategic overview**

Sound health is crucial for integration - not only for its inherent value but also for its effect on vital integration outcomes, including economic and educational performance. Health care is both complex and costly. It accounts for more than 11% of GDP, occupies roughly 40% of provincial spending, and spans a wide array of services and service providers. Included are services delivered by family physicians, specialists, hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, dentists, therapists, and other health professionals. Access to these services is managed by numerous public and quasi-public institutions.

Not surprisingly, many newcomers find it difficult to understand, access, and navigate the health system. As a result, they do not get the help they need, nor the help they are entitled to as taxpayers. Instead, they engage the health system in improvised and inefficient ways - such as relying disproportionately on emergency room visits – and, as a group, receive substandard service. An extensive body of research has confirmed the existence of health care inequities and access barriers that are likely responsible, at least in part, for the decline in health suffered by immigrants after arriving in Canada.

To address the many health issues that fall within its purview, the Health and Wellbeing Sector Table has decided to focus on six strategic priorities:

- 7) To improve newcomers' access to health care, including preventive services, primary health care, and dental services
- 8) To improve newcomers' access to mental health care, though preventive services, mental health promotion, training of counselors, and trauma counseling
- 9) To enhance health literacy among immigrants and refugees, and to build capacity to support this goal
- 10) To enhance intercultural competencies, diversity, and other related capacities among health care providers, as well as promoting the hiring and retention of racialized medical professionals and lay health workers
- 11) To elevate the importance that health organizations attach to the provision of immigrant and refugee health services and to improve service coordination by agencies

- 12) To improve the quality and accessibility of local health care data bearing on the health and service outcomes of newcomers, and to stimulate related research

To implement the strategic priorities, the Sector Table has launched a variety of high quality initiatives involving some eighty partners and extensive resources. According to the partners, participation in the Sector Table has enhanced their capacity to work coherently, to mobilize stakeholders, to leverage resources, and to share knowledge in connection with immigrant and refugee services. The work has generated a strong and active leadership cadre, numerous robust partnerships, integrated strategic agendas, and an enhanced capacity to impact public policy and health spending priorities.

In terms of client services, the efforts of the Sector Table are seen as having a direct bearing on service accessibility, program uptake, health literacy, and service provider capacity. These improvements are correlated with positive immigrant and refugee health outcomes.

## **Strategic priorities: Current actions and future plans**

### **Priority 1: To improve newcomers' access to health care, including preventive services, primary health care, and dental services**

#### **Action 1: Establish the Ottawa Newcomer Clinic**

The Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre (ONHC) provides health services, including screening and mental health counseling for government assisted refugees, before transitioning them to mainstream services. The ONHC is a collaborative undertaking involving the Somerset West Community Health Centre, the Catholic Centre for Immigrants, and OLIP.

Since its inception, the Clinic has seen countless refugees, connecting them with family doctors. This marks a significant achievement for a traditionally underserved group. A measure of the Clinic's 'success' is that clients resist onward referral and express a preference to remain with the Clinic.

Consideration is being given to expanding the Clinic's scope by extending assistance beyond GARS (Government Assisted Refugees) and providing additional services (such as dental services). In addition, the Clinic will be given a role in providing settlement counselors with health-related training.

#### **Action 2: Establish the Ottawa Language Access (OLA) project**

The OLA project has transitioned from planning to implementation. The goal of the project is to help immigrants and refugees with limited proficiency in English or French

to access health care. The initial areas of focus are: diabetes and other chronic diseases; seniors' health; and mental health and addictions.

The OLA offers a combination of telephone and in-person interpretation services - booked either on-line or by telephone - to prescribed local health organizations. The project builds on an existing model operating in Toronto. The main OLA partners are the Champlain LHIN (Local Integration Health Network) which is underwriting the project, OLIP, and the Somerset West Community Health Centre. Immigrant Women Serving Organizations (IWSO) and OCISO were key contributors in terms of knowledge and experience.

The project is premised on several key findings and observations: (1) That the cost of (in-person) interpretation can be sharply reduced through bulk contracting and telephone interpretation; (2) That shifting interpretation 'technologies' will take time to come on line; (3) That health agencies wishing to access telephone interpretation require training for the program to realize its promise; (4) That interpretation standards and interpreter training are required to ensure uniformity and quality; and (5) That outreach to health organizations is necessary to ensure that interpretation capacity is efficiently utilized.

### **Action 3: Create a Multicultural Health Navigators Team**

The Multicultural Health Navigator initiative helps newcomers understand and access the health care system, increasing their knowledge of health services. Four groups are being targeted: Franco-Caribbeans and Franco-Africans; Somalis; Arabic-speaking newcomers; and Nepalese. The project also hopes to enhance awareness and cultural sensitivity among health care providers.

The Navigator initiative is modeled after Edmonton's successful, long-standing Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative. The initiative is supported by the Champlain LHIN, and is delivered by the Somerset West and Centretown Community Health Centres, in collaboration with the Catholic Centre for Immigrants and the Economic and Social Council of Ottawa-Carleton (CESOC).

The program having transitioned to permanent funding now employs four full-time community health workers (or navigators) who provide outreach and liaise with nine targeted cultural and linguistic communities, helping their members to access health services. The navigators are themselves members of the communities they serve and speak the language of the community.

Since 2014, health navigators have assisted hundreds of members of the targeted communities, conducting home visits, locating primary-care practitioners, and

accompanying clients to appointments. Following a positive evaluation, the project now receives ongoing program funding.

### **Future plans to address Priority 1**

The Sector Table would like to promote an expansion in primary care for newcomers based, in part, on scaling up and mainstreaming existing, successful Sector projects.

The Sector Table is also planning to expand the quality, availability and utilization of interpretation services within the larger health care system. This will be accomplished through advocacy, drawing on an evaluation of the successful Language Access project and bolstered by improved interpretation standards.

A third area that the Sector Table hopes to address is the provision of free dental services for new immigrants and refugees. Initial plans call for making dental services available within existing settlement and health service hubs or through mobile health units. The services would be delivered by volunteer dentists, assisted by skilled newcomers. Research would be conducted to assess promising practices used elsewhere, including a model used by the Ottawa Mission to treat homeless persons.

The fourth area where the Sector Table hopes to expand services centres on health care and end-of-life care for immigrant seniors. Seniors represent a growing but underserved constituency about which little is known.

The final initiative that the Table intends to implement in connection with Priority 1 is evaluations of Ottawa's overall response to the health needs of the Syrian refugees, with the aim of drawing learnings that will help the sector enhance all refugees' access to health care.

## **Priority 2: To improve newcomers' access to mental health care, though preventive services, mental health promotion, training of counselors, and trauma-based counseling**

### **Action 1: Create a walk-in Mental Health Clinic**

The Mental Health Clinic(s), led by Jewish Family Services, offers walk-in, single session counseling that focuses on mental and emotional wellbeing. The Clinic brings together partners from Ottawa's health and resource centres and from LASI (Local Agencies Serving Immigrants) to address the long-recognized need for mental health services in languages other than English or French. Clinic wait times are low and services are free to users, who do not need formal referrals. Multilingual support is being offered at three

sites to clients of OCISO, Somali Family Services, South East Ottawa Community Health Centre, and Ottawa Chinese Community Services Organization. Clinic counselors receive monthly training in narrative therapy from the University of Ottawa.

Initially, service providers were skeptical about the value of single sessions but the Clinic has exceeded expectations, proving to be effective for over fifty percent of clients who suffer from mild to medium mental and emotional problems. Current plans call for the program to be extended to additional settlement agencies.

### **Future plans to address Priority 2**

Improving mental health services for new arrivals has been assigned a separate priority in the refreshed Ottawa Immigration Strategy. Until now, mental health issues have been bundled with other health concerns.

In accordance with the revised priority structure, the mental health clinic has been situated under the mental health strategic priority. It should be noted, however, that both the Ottawa Newcomer Clinic and the Language Access project (which fall under Priority 1) continue to address mental health issues.

In implementing the new mental health priority, the Health and Wellbeing Sector Table has decided to focus on both the formal, dedicated, health infrastructure as well as community institutions and local leaders who are concerned with community wellbeing:

(i) Dedicated health infrastructure:

With a view to improving the responsiveness and accessibility of mainstream health organizations, including Health and Resource Centres and hospitals, the Sector Table hopes to induce these institutions to implement mental health and trauma counseling programs for immigrants and refugees. In support of this objective, the Table intends to help collaborating institutions improve training for mental health counselors and psychiatrists so they are better equipped to treat immigrants. Along with other changes, this will require more extensive and more effective use of interpreters, which the Table hopes to address under another priority.

(ii) Community Institutions and local leaders

On the community front, two initiatives are being considered. The first centres on working with the Youth Services Bureau to improve access to mental health services and counseling for immigrant and refugee children. Support for these measures will be sought from the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Newcomer Youth Settlement Program which aims to provide youth with better access to culturally appropriate services based in the community. The second initiative will attempt to enlist religious leaders, faith-based groups, and educational

institutions in de-stigmatizing mental illness and building awareness of mental health and trauma counseling services.

### **Priority 3: To enhance health literacy among immigrants and refugees, and to build capacity to support this goal**

#### **Action 1: Health Skills Health Smart Project (HSHS)**

The Health Skills Health Smart initiative is a collaborative undertaking involving Ottawa Public Health (OPH), OLIP, and other settlement and health service providers. HSHS aims to improve health literacy and access to appropriate health services by newcomers.

Over 150 frontline workers from settlement agencies, community health and resource centres, and ethnocultural associations have been trained to deliver health information to newcomers, including where to obtain health services, how to access to medical practitioners, when to go to hospital, and how to manage health through nutrition and physical activity. To help practitioners deliver the information, a resource manual has been developed containing training scenarios and support for interactions with clients. In addition to describing where services are located, the manual discusses healthy eating, dental care, immunization and others subjects that newcomers find pertinent.

According to an internal evaluation by Ottawa Public Health, the training program and resources developed for settlement workers have been well received. As a result, the original training material has been expanded and the program manual for practitioners has been translated into French and adapted, as necessary.

#### **Action 2: Promote health knowledge through language training**

The *Promoting Healthy Living through Language Instruction* project is an intersectoral initiative that incorporates health lessons into English and French language training programs for adults (ESL - English as a Second Language – and FSL – French as a Second Language). The project is based on a partnership involving Ottawa Public Health, the Ottawa Carleton District School Board, the Conseil des écoles public de l'est d'Ontario (CEPEO), Ottawa Catholic School Board and OLIP.

Lesson plans for the project were developed by a multidisciplinary team of ESL instructors, nutritionists, public health nurses and others. Thirty-three lessons have been produced on topics that include healthy eating, dental and mental health, active living, and shopping and cooking on a budget. ESL instructors can access lesson plans on-line, utilizing the OLIP website and other web platforms.

Program assessments have been extremely positive, leading to efforts to institutionalize the inclusion of health information in ESL curricula and ESL trainer programs. Lesson plans are also being adapted for use in French language training.

Building on this success, the health-language training model has been shared with other sector tables to encourage the development of training material that bears on other settlement areas.

### **Action 3: Promote awareness and screening for chronic disease**

The chronic disease screening project makes immigrant communities aware of the risk of contracting diabetes; the need for medical screening; and how to reduce disease susceptibility. Communities targeted by the program include South Asians and Nepalese, Somalis, and Ibero-Americans. The project involves the Canadian Diabetes Association, the Catholic Centre for Immigrants, the Champlain LHIN, and the Centertown Community Health Centre.

The project delivers educational presentations to the targeted groups. To assist in this task, community representatives are trained as liaison agents, responsible for promoting follow-up visits to the Centertown Community Health Centre for medical referrals. The representatives also help to adapt training material to accord with community needs.

Since the program's inception, screening numbers have risen sharply with some 1,500 persons having been screened for diabetes. Relations with community developers and health support workers have also expanded, as has training. The latter relies on webinars to reach health workers and service providers. Roughly 325 health care providers have received training.

According to a recent evaluation, reaction by both trainers and stakeholders has been positive: training tools are regarded as useful; training is seen as having benefitted the work of service providers; and services have improved. Confirming these assessments, the targeted communities were unanimous in their approval of the program and respondents felt that the project had strengthened bonds between communities and service providers.

### **Future plans to address Priority 3**

The Sector Table plans to expand its efforts to disseminate health information by looking for synergies with other programs. The Table also intends to conduct research to identify promising dissemination and health promotion practices used elsewhere. Possible dissemination measures identified by the Sector Table include:



- The use of language classes as a platform for disseminating information about priority health concerns, including mental health, dental care, and reproductive health
- The use of community radio to promote health literacy and to disseminate information on key health topics
- The use of food banks as venues for health promotion and health literacy
- The use of translation and interpretation services to aid in the dissemination of health information
- The use of language classes as a means of disseminating information about chronic disease prevention and treatment

Several of the proposed projects represent extensions of the Health Skills-Health Smart project and Promoting Health Living through Language Instruction project. The Sector Table intends to evaluate these projects in order to transfer their lessons to new initiatives being planned.

#### **Priority 4: To enhance intercultural competencies, diversity, and other related capacities among health care providers and to increase the hiring and retention of racialized medical professionals, connectors, and lay health workers**

##### **Action 1: Provide cross-cultural competency training for health practitioners**

This project is directed to practitioners, intermediaries and managers in the health field. It delivers workshops, webinars and other training on best practices in the provision of health care to cultural communities. The project was developed as a collaborative undertaking led by the Centretown Community Health Centre.

##### **Action 2: Promote health equity**

The health equity project has compiled a repository of tools and training material to help community health organizations in the Champlain region provide equitable, culturally-sensitive services. The goal is to reduce health care disparities and to prepare health care professionals and managers to deal with the challenges of creating an equitable environment. The repository of tools and practices has been well received by health care agencies and has created momentum for change.

The project has benefitted from the ideas and support of the umbrella Ottawa Equity project. The Equity Project includes OLIP, Centretown Community Health Centre, Lowertown Community Resource Centre, Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre, the City of Ottawa, Youth Services Bureau, Ottawa Public Health, the University of

Ottawa, the City for All Women Initiative, the Ottawa Carleton District School Board, the Children's Aid Society, and the Ottawa Police Services.

### **Action 3: Improve refugee health services**

The Health Advocacy for Refugees Program (HARP) is an initiative of the Elisabeth Bruyère Research Institute at the University of Ottawa. Financial assistance comes from the Alex Trebek foundation and in-kind support from the Ottawa Newcomer Clinic. There is also involvement by ethnocultural communities and interpretation agencies.

The goals of HARP are to provide refugees with quick access to health care; to train medical students to work with refugees and vulnerable populations (under the supervision of physicians); to acquaint students with issues relating to global health and infectious disease; and to equip medical trainees with the intercultural competencies they will need to work in diverse settings. The program is widely regarded as a success.

### **Future plans to address Priority 4**

The Health and Wellbeing Sector Table plans to advance Priority 4 by building on current initiatives. Specifically, the Table hopes to extend the lessons of the Internationally Trained Medical Professionals initiative to involve immigrants as lay health workers and as bridging agents between cultural communities and health service delivery institutions. The advice of the Economic Sector Table and the Ottawa Equity Project will be sought regarding the development of alternative career paths for immigrant health professionals who have not met regulatory and licensing requirements.

Another area where the Sector Table hopes to build on current initiatives is health equity. Follow-ups will be conducted with users of the health equity repository to better understand why and how the repository is used. This will guide new efforts to promote health equity and equitable institutions. In the same vein, the Sector Table intends to expand cultural competency training for health professionals across the full spectrum of health services and health institutions.

## **Priority 5: To elevate the importance that health organizations attach to the provision of immigrant and refugee health services and to improve service coordination by agencies**

### **Action 1: Secure closer alignment between the Health Sector's strategic priorities and those of the Champlain LHIN**

The Champlain LHIN has been a leader in championing and underwriting the work of the OLIP Health and Wellbeing Sector table. This is reflected in investments by the LHIN in projects aimed at promoting better, and better-targeted, newcomer health services, as well as stronger coordination between health and settlement agencies.

LHIN operational priorities align with those of the Health and Wellbeing Sector Table in many areas, including chronic disease, seniors' assistance, mental health, and interpretation. This has allowed the LHIN to actively support OLIP's strategic objectives in the health arena. Notwithstanding this alignment, however, OLIP aspires to amend the LHIN's regulatory priorities to include immigrants, placing them on a par with aboriginal and francophone populations (which are assigned regulatory priority). The sought-after change would reinforce support for prioritizing newcomer health services and transitioning newcomer health projects into mainstream programs.

### **Action 2: Increase research and consultation related to Francophone immigrant health needs**

This project is in the early stages of development. It calls for collaboration among OLIP, the Réseau de soutien de l'immigration francophone, and the Réseau de service de santé francophone to conduct research on the health needs of Francophone immigrants in Ottawa and on the availability of health services in French. The project aims to improve health planning for immigrants by francophone service agencies and to stimulate productive exchanges with parallel Anglophone institutions.

### **Future plans to address Priority 5**

The Sector Table aims to expand its efforts under the refreshed Ottawa Immigration Strategy in two ways: first, to improve primary care services for immigrants and refugees by developing closer collaborative relationships between the Sector Table and Ottawa hospitals; and, second, to improve the alignment of strategic plans among Francophone institutions and health organizations, insofar as they affect health services for Francophone newcomers. This latter objective will, hopefully, lead key organizations to improve health services for Francophone newcomers. The lead organizations driving these changes will be OLIP, the Champlain LHIN, the Réseau des services de santé en français de l'est de l'Ontario (RSSF), and the Réseaux en immigration francophone (RIF). The Sector Table intends to support the process through research and consultations.

### **Priority 6: To improve the quality and accessibility of local health care data bearing on the health and service outcomes of newcomers, and to stimulate related research**

### **Future plans to address Priority 6**

Priority 6 was part of the original Ottawa Immigration Strategy but little progress was made during the Strategy's first phase. To implement the priority, the Sector Table intends to:

- Identify potential data sources that could be accessed or developed for use in measuring the progress of health-related projects initiated by the Sector Table
- Develop indicators to assess the need for particular health services by discrete newcomer populations. The indicators would focus on key population health priorities (espoused by various institutions) measuring immigrant and refugee needs, service utilization, and service availability. An example would be the indicators developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada
- Evaluate all Sector Table initiatives to establish their efficacy and efficiency with respect to community, Sector Table, funder, and program objectives. The example discussed by the Table was an evaluation of the Ottawa Newcomer Clinic to assess its impact on service utilization and client health outcomes
- Engage local academic researchers and graduate students to undertake research examining newcomer health and wellbeing. Support for university-led, evidence-based research in the area of diversity and service impact will be sought from CIHR (Canadian Institutes of Health Research)

# Economic Sector Table

---

## Strategic overview

Economic success is essential for integration and for social and civic inclusion. Because of this, it is vital that newcomers quickly find jobs commensurate with their skills, education and abilities. Alternatively, they must be able to avail themselves of entrepreneurial opportunities that align with their aptitudes and dispositions.

Ensuring that newcomers are economically successful is as important to the host population as it is to the newcomers. Indeed, Canada's system of immigrant selection and admissions is based on the premise that newcomers will contribute economically to the well-being of their hosts. In other words, there is not only an ethical imperative to help immigrants and refugees succeed, but also a practical, economic incentive to do so.

Notwithstanding the shared interest of immigrants and established residents in newcomers' economic integration, since the 1980's, immigrants have not had the same success as similarly endowed native born Canadians. The reasons are many and complex: language shortfalls; unfamiliar workplace culture; risk averse employers who undervalue education and experience acquired abroad; limited access by newcomers to social networks and social capital; and discrimination. Whatever the reasons, the depressed economic outcomes that result blight the lives of both newcomers and their children.

As noted earlier, recent federal and provincial policies have swelled economic immigration and have emphasized selection factors linked to economic success and rapid absorption into the labour market. Relatedly, the new directions have also assigned a larger, gateway role to employers and educational institutions in the admissions process. These changes impact economic integration and they will need to be taken into account in the design and delivery of settlement programs.

In order to better respond to newcomer needs and the changing economic and policy environment, the Economic Sector Table has chosen six strategic priorities to advance:

1. To extend and improve the strategic alignment among institutions and initiatives concerned with newcomer economic integration
2. To help immigrants navigate towards employment opportunities in a changing labour environment
3. To reduce barriers that impede small and medium-sized enterprises from hiring immigrants
4. To promote and support entrepreneurship among Ottawa newcomers

5. To enhance Ottawa's ability to recruit newcomers by projecting itself, and the national capital region, as a diverse, world-class capital that welcomes skilled immigrants and international students
6. To clarify misconceptions and myths about immigrant capabilities and contributions in order to improve receptivity

To help implement the six strategic priorities, the Sector Table has created several working groups: An Employer Engagement Subgroup; an Entrepreneurship Subgroup; and a Service Capacity and Coordination Subgroup. This machinery appears to be bearing fruit, even though there are challenges. While many of the Table's initiatives are still new, they are promising. The Table has the support of some forty institutional partners and has leveraged extensive financial support.

## **Strategic priorities: Current actions and future plans**

### **Priority 1: To extend and improve the strategic alignment among institutions and initiatives concerned with newcomer economic integration**

#### **Action 1: Influence Ottawa's immigration strategy and Term of Council priorities**

Collaboration between the City of Ottawa and the OLIP partnership has benefited both parties: planning for newcomers has improved, partnerships have deepened, and municipal staff in multiple departments have been sensitized to newcomer issues, leading to service improvements. Participation in OLIP has allowed the City to achieve greater coherence by helping to align corporate responses and services for immigrants across municipal departments. OLIP has also provided the City with an enhanced capacity to interact with OLIP partners and immigrant communities (as distinct from interacting with individual immigrants).

OLIP formally participates in the City's planning process to establish Term of Council priorities that guide strategic planning and to develop collaborative initiatives. The inclusion of OLIP priorities in the Term of Council priorities has strengthened municipal attention to immigrant needs, supported by designated leadership, and backed by accountability requirements. Ottawa City Council has formally agreed to enhance immigrant services, to address service gaps, and to undertake practical initiatives that improve economic and social integration.

#### **Action 2: Merge the Internationally Trained Workers' Partnership with OLIP's Economic Sector Table**

To prevent duplication and to reduce collaborator burden, the pre-existing

Internationally Trained Workers' Partnership (ITWP) has merged with OLIP's Economic Sector Table. The merger covers both membership and strategic priorities.

**Action 3: Establish a mechanism for Ottawa settlement service providers to collaborate on new business and service opportunities (research)**

OLIP was the catalyst for a study commissioned by LASI (Local Agencies Serving Immigrants) to examine new opportunities for settlement agencies to capitalize on their expertise and networks. A research study, supported by the United Way and Mitacs (a national research program), identified potential opportunities for local agencies to recruit newcomers abroad (students and temporary workers), and to market and deliver services to be provided by LASI members. LASI is assessing the recommendations and deciding whether to proceed towards a pilot project.

**Future plans to address Priority 1**

The Economic Sector Table is considering additional measures to advance the strategic alignment among select economic institutions and initiatives. These involve:

- (i) Enhancing OLIP's capacity to improve the alignment between local plans and those of public agencies and crown corporations whose geographic and policy mandates extend beyond Ottawa and immigration. The Sector Table will examine promising practices used by other LIPs and by local planning bodies in setting its action plan.
- (ii) Strengthening the alignment between OLIP's economic interests and the interests of key Ottawa-focused economic institutions, including the Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce (and its member institutions), the Local Employment Planning Council, and institutions engaged in large scale infrastructure development.
- (iii) Advancing immigrant employment by establishing it as a cross-sectoral priority within OLIP. The Economic Sector Table will collaborate with the Education, Health and Wellbeing, Language and Settlement and Civic Integration Tables to advance a series of projects – many of which are already underway - aimed at promoting immigrant employment and employer receptivity. Integral to this effort will be an attempt to forge links among promising initiatives to promote their expansion. (Examples of cross-sectoral projects include: Internship programs at the school boards; projects to enhance the hiring of racialized professionals and workers; measures to encourage employers to use Canadian language benchmarks to assess the linguistic requirements of jobs; and efforts to engage leaders and promote more equitable systems for hiring newcomers.)

## **Priority 2: To help immigrants navigate towards employment in a changing labour environment**

### **Action 1: Clarify pathways to employment in the trades**

The City of Ottawa has worked with the Y to create a guide discussing employment in the regulated trades, re-certification and apprenticeship. As well, ten videos have been produced. These offer interviews with immigrants, views from employers, and various perspectives on certification and employment in the trades in Ottawa. The information is available on the City's immigration portal.

### **Action 2: Create internships to open doors to careers in local institutions**

The paid internship initiative emulates a successful federal internship program. Two internship initiatives are underway: a program that places interns with the Ottawa Carleton District School Board (Ottawa's largest Board); and a second initiative, tied to the Municipal Work Experience Program, that places interns with the City.

The City program situates immigrant interns in jobs that are temporarily vacant, subsequently giving interns an opportunity to compete for the positions. The program has produced successful transitions into full time work.

### **Action 3: Provide immigrants with greater access to training loans**

The Ottawa Community Loan Fund (OCLF) has expanded its product mix to better address the needs of newcomers. OCLF had been emphasizing business loans, whereas newcomers needed help accessing professional development training. To meet this need, OCLF introduced professional development loans that cover training costs.

To extend its reach into immigrant communities, OCLF has hired multilingual outreach workers. Initially, coverage extended to English, French, Farsi and Spanish but this has been expanded to include Mandarin, Arabic and Hindi. To further support the loan program, OCLF works with community partners who offer counseling to clients whose career plans are too weak to merit support. The vast majority of participants have expressed satisfaction with the help they received. The model is being expanded to include more communities.

### **Future plans to address Priority 2**

The Sector Table intends to double down on its efforts to improve newcomer access to employment in the trades and in the federal public service. The partners will focus on securing additional internships, mentoring opportunities, and bridging employment; the latter will seek federal assistance in overcoming security impediments to public sector



employment. Security clearances are notoriously difficult to obtain for immigrants from certain countries.

A second area where the Sector Table intends to redouble its efforts is employment mapping in aid of service delivery and job navigation by newcomers. Policy changes are expected to alter the number, composition, and downstream needs of immigrants, refugees, and other arrivals. The assistance of the Local Employment Planning Council and the City of Ottawa will be sought to better analyze the match between newcomer qualifications and developing employment opportunities for both high skilled and low to medium-skilled jobs. The goal is to match job development efforts and training supports to emerging labour market conditions.

### **Priority 3: To reduce barriers that impede small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from hiring immigrants**

#### **Action 1: Increase employer awareness of Canadian Language Benchmarks**

This initiative is featured in the description of activities by the Language Sector Table. It aims to educate SMEs about the use of Language Benchmarks to assess job language requirements and the corresponding skills of applicants. The project will build connections between SMEs and organizations offering language training, assessment and interpretation. A partnership involving OLIP, Labour Market Ottawa, the Canadian Council for Language Benchmarks (CCLB), the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, Hire Immigrants Ottawa, and World Skills is seeking support for a pilot project to bolster employer awareness.

#### **Future plans to address Priority 3**

Three types of interventions will be emphasized by the Sector Table in an effort to promote newcomer hiring and advancement by SMEs.

- (i) The Sector Table has agreed to focus on bridging measures - notably mentorships, internships, and trade apprenticeships – within SMEs. Both high and low skilled employment will be targeted, including a strong focus on the trades.
- (ii) An effort will be made to identify and address the major challenges that discourage local SMEs from hiring newcomers. Closely related to this, the Sector Table intends to develop and promote a persuasive business case for SMEs to hire immigrants.
- (iii) An initiative will be undertaken to identify, analyze and implement promising practices related to newcomer hiring and employment. The practices will include ideas developed in other jurisdictions as well as local measures, such as those

introduced by Hire Immigrants Ottawa and the Ottawa Job Matching Network. An effort will be made to scale up innovative ideas that show promise.

#### **Priority 4: To promote and support entrepreneurship among Ottawa newcomers**

##### **Action 1: Promote access to business loans**

Small business loans were introduced by the Ottawa Community Loan Fund (OCLF) in 2014. Recently, this assistance has grown to include lending circles and, in an attempt to extend the program's reach, the OCLF has hired outreach 'ambassadors' with diverse language skills. Client evaluations have been highly positive and newcomers have expressed satisfaction with the business start-up loans they have received.

##### **Action 2: Implement Immigrant Entrepreneurship Awards**

High profile Entrepreneurship Awards have been introduced to honor immigrant entrepreneurs in Ottawa. The awards showcase the fact that immigrants create jobs, connect Ottawa to global markets, and promote innovation. The awards ceremony is well attended by Ottawa's business community and helps immigrant entrepreneurs expand their business networks. The first ceremony took place in 2012 during Ottawa's first Immigration Forum, now the Awards are an annual event.

##### **Action 3: Provide customized workshops for immigrant entrepreneurs**

This project will be fleshed out under Ottawa's refreshed Immigration Strategy in collaboration with Invest Ottawa.

##### **Future plans to address Priority 4**

Two courses of action have been identified by the Sector Table for advancing immigrant entrepreneurship: The first will concentrate on training, notably business mentoring and financial training on how to start and operate a business; the second will explore promising practices for encouraging entrepreneurship among newcomers.

To implement the practices, support will be sought from OLIP's partners, including the City of Ottawa, Invest Ottawa, the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, the Ottawa Public Library, World Skills, and the Ottawa Community Loan Fund.

#### **Priority 5: To enhance Ottawa's ability to recruit newcomers by projecting itself, and the national capital region, as a diverse, world-class capital that welcomes skilled immigrants and international students**

**Action 1: Develop and promote Welcoming Ottawa Week (WOW)**

Welcoming Ottawa Week (WOW), an annual, and growing, celebration of diversity and immigration, has been successfully implemented and is now in its fourth year. WOW enhances Ottawa's reputation as a diverse, world-class capital that attracts immigrants, including skilled newcomers and international students.

**Action 2: Collaborate with the City of Gatineau to develop a shared approach to attracting, informing, and retaining newcomers**

Ottawa and Gatineau form a highly integrated economic region with large numbers of people crossing the Ottawa River, in both directions, to work, shop and study. Despite this fluidity, jurisdictional and regulatory divides affect the delivery of federal and provincial immigration and labour market services. As well, certain trades are restricted from working across provincial boundaries. These obstacles hinder the development of a more powerful approach to attracting and integrating newcomers.

The project is still at an early stage of development, though it has the 'blessing' of both the Ottawa and Gatineau municipalities. The aim is to identify areas where the two cities and local immigrant serving organizations might work together to develop and disseminate information to attract newcomers and to encourage them to settle in the Ottawa-Gatineau region. Initial meetings have involved the heads of immigrant serving agencies. These are being expanded to include municipal, economic, and cultural institutions, as well as local political leaders.

**Action 3: Redevelop the Ottawa Immigration Portal**

The City of Ottawa, with logistical and engagement assistance from OLIP, has extensively revised its immigration and international student portal. The aim was to strengthen Ottawa's ability to attract and retain newcomers and to demonstrate the City's commitment to integration and inclusion. The portal provides extensive information about working, learning, and living in Ottawa. There is also material that is regularly updated for students and internationally trained workers.

**Action 4: Welcome and support international students**

In collaboration with partners from the Economic and Education Sector Tables, the City of Ottawa periodically hosts a welcome event for international students. (The last one took place in 2015.) The event seeks to inform students about local opportunities, to promote ties to newcomer communities, and to identify immigration pathways for those who want to remain in Ottawa.

**Future plans to address Priority 5**

In addition to the actions identified above, the Sector Table is planning to advance

Priority 5 through investments in two areas:

- (i) The first area will involve expanding existing promotional and recruitment efforts that target immigrants and international students. This will take the form of enhancements to Ottawa's Immigration Portal, including the provision of new content and new partners. Involvement will be sought from Ottawa's school boards, health centres, and a broad range of business and economic institutions.

The Portal and other on-line channels will be used to communicate the improved quality of Ottawa's welcome, including the availability of high quality pre and post-arrival services, cultural and educational opportunities, and economic development aids. An effort will be made to increase the overall granularity of promotional efforts, providing greater detail in regard to City and neighbourhood characteristics so as to better target specific populations and interests.

- (ii) The Table intends to seek opportunities to align local economic development interests with broader federal and provincial measures to recruit business and skilled immigrants, international students, and Francophone newcomers. These measures span multiple departments. Opportunities for alignment will be sought in regard to various admission programs, as well as targeted promotions, both at home and abroad.

## **Priority 6: To clarify misconceptions and myths about immigrant capabilities and contributions in order to improve receptivity**

### **Actions:**

No actions were taken on this priority in the first period of OIS implementation. Going forward, actions to implement the priority will be developed as part of the refreshed Ottawa Immigration Strategy.

### **Future plans to address Priority 6**

Ottawa has received large numbers of refugees, a trend that is expected to continue. Although refugees are admitted for humanitarian reasons, research shows that they participate actively in the labour market and the local economy. The Economic Sector Table hopes to educate Ottawa's business community, and the public at large, regarding the economic contribution that refugees make and the potential they represent. To do so, the Table will seek the help of Ontario's Ministry of Immigration and International Trade to dispel myths about refugees.

# Education Sector Table

---

## Strategic overview

Immigrants and refugees are motivated by the prospects of a better life for themselves and their children. While they understand that they themselves are likely to encounter hardships, their hopes and expectations are that their children will face a level playing field in which their opportunities will be on par with those of native-born Canadians.

Few elements are as central to the realization of a productive future as education. For this reason, newcomers to Canada see education as being among the top five most important integration factors. For this reason, access to education is identified by newcomers as a key determinant of their satisfaction with life in Canada.

Numerous studies have confirmed the importance of inclusion for educational attainment, producing higher rates of graduation and a greater proclivity to continue learning. These factors are, in turn, important drivers of economic and social integration.

Five strategic priorities have been established by the Education Sector Table. These are:

1. To improve the cultural competencies of teachers and staff as well as the “fit” between schools, teachers, immigrant students and communities, particularly in neighbourhoods with high immigrant concentrations
2. To work with schools to foster greater involvement by immigrant parents in school activities, in student academic participation, and in school governance
3. To build trust among schools, immigrant students and minority communities, raising awareness of newcomer educational successes, and promoting a shared understanding of newcomer educational challenges and solution pathways
4. To develop neighbourhood and school catchment area plans that complement and support school boards’ mandates
5. To build evidence regarding the challenges that exist in neighborhoods with high concentrations of immigrants and to create multi-sectoral partnerships in support of students’ academic success

The strategic priorities identified by the Education Sector Table are consistent with the main factors identified by research as being responsible for high levels of education attainment: parent engagement; creation of a diverse and inclusive school environment; and the development of trust and understanding between minority communities and schools in order to foster collaborative approaches to problem diagnosis and solutions. The priorities agreed by

the Sector Table enjoy widespread support from the Sector's institutional partners and community stakeholders.

The Sector membership includes the four Ottawa school boards (public, Catholic, English and French), the City of Ottawa, OLIP, immigrant parent associations, OCISO - Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (which is funded to deliver the award-winning Multicultural Liaison Officer Program in Ottawa schools), and Community Health and Resource Centres.

## **Strategic priorities: Current actions and future plans**

This section identifies and details the actions that are associated with the Sector Table's five priorities. It bears mention that a key Table accomplishment centres on the participation of all four school boards, thus permitting development of a shared strategic focus.

### **Priority 1: To improve the cultural competencies of teachers and staff as well as the “fit” between schools, teachers, immigrant students and communities, particularly in neighbourhoods with high immigrant concentrations**

#### **Action 1: Increase immigrant recruitment and hiring within the educational system**

There are pronounced differences between the profiles of Ottawa's school workforce and its student population. This project aims to alter this balance by promoting immigrant recruitment and diversity at various levels within the school system. Among the measures that have been implemented is a paid internship pilot program that was brokered by OLIP, in collaboration with the Economic Sector Table, the City of Ottawa and service provider organizations with access to internationally trained professionals. The pilot seeks to promote employment in the trades, high skilled technical professions, and custodial jobs. In its initial phase, the pilot will focus on three internships within the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB), over a six to eighteen month period. This will demonstrate the program's potential for addressing hard-to-fill jobs and increasing diversity within a unionized environment.

The Sector Table is also involved in securing internships for youth summer employment programs, as well as promoting newcomer recruitment for teaching positions. This latter measure is singularly important because increased teacher diversity would support efforts by the Sector Table to increase student, parent and community engagement in the education process. The challenge inherent in this project is the stagnant growth in teaching positions, as well as regulatory impediments that require school boards to employ a seniority-based roster system for filling temporary teaching positions. Advocacy groups are attempting to modify the hiring rules. At the same time, the

Sector Table plans to use its community ties and links to settlement organizations to encourage immigrants to enter the pipeline for teaching jobs.

### **Action 2: Introducing diversity and inclusion into the teacher training curriculum**

New regulations (September 2015) require faculties of education to include diversity and inclusion training in teaching programs. The Sector Table intends to work with local faculties of education to support the implementation of the new curriculum. The Sector Table is currently assessing how best to support teacher training programs to implement the new diversity objectives and to strengthen the links between educational institutions and community organizations. Among the measures being considered are increased contact between teachers and immigrant serving organizations; introducing parent and community perspectives on how welcoming and inclusive schools are; and identifying promising practices for enhancing teacher diversity training.

### **Future plans to address Priority 1**

The Sector Table hopes to build on the work of the OCDSB by promoting the establishment of paid internship programs for immigrants at all four school boards. In support of this effort, the Table intends to engage the senior leadership cadre at school boards in order to secure their commitment to this goal.

Secondly, the Table will also seek to enlist the support of unions, regulatory bodies and settlement organizations to help minority and foreign trained teachers access teaching positions. This effort will take time; milestones for the medium term will need to be identified.

In order to ensure continued attention to the issue of minority inclusion, the Sector Table will explore ways to allow for the input of Multicultural Liaison Officers to have in the performance evaluation of principals.

## **Priority 2: Working with schools to foster greater parental involvement in school activities, student academic participation, and school governance**

### **Action 1: Parent, school and neighbourhood engagement to promote academic achievement by immigrant students**

The Education Sector Table aims to increase parental engagement by developing a shared framework to assist Ottawa's four school boards, schools, and community organizations. The ultimate goal is to enhance the academic success and wellbeing of immigrant and refugee children. In support of this objective, the Ministry of Education has provided seed funding for a part-time coordinator to plan consultations with

parents to obtain a solid understanding of the barriers that prevented newcomer parents from becoming more engaged in school activities and their children's education. OCISO and representatives of the four boards played key roles; and they felt that the initiative was successful in eliciting ideas and information. A set of guidelines have been developed to assist school boards in their efforts to strengthen immigrant parents' involvement in student success.

The Sector Table is now finalizing the guidelines and plans to promote its adoption by the school boards. This work will be assisted by the Multicultural Liaison Officers (MLOs) who currently operate in more than one hundred schools. Follow-up discussions will be held with parent groups.

### **Future plans to address Priority 2**

In support of Priority 2, the Sector Table intends to develop additional mechanisms to assist newcomer communities to become more involved with schools and school boards. Included in this will be efforts to promote implementation of the newly developed parent engagement guidelines by all four school boards. As well, the Sector Table will seek to align its initiatives with the School Effectiveness Framework (component 6), which requires boards to reach out and to develop partnerships with parents, families, and communities to support student well-being and achievement.

On a second front, the Sector Table intends to expand the production and dissemination of information for parents utilizing plain speech, translated into multiple languages. A variety of media will be employed to communicate information about how to register a child, how to read report cards, how to engage with schools, and how to deal with conflicts. As well, partnerships will be formed to help build awareness and understanding of how the public education system works. Plans also call for the use of language interpretation services to broaden involvement as well as peer mentorships between families and school boards. The Peel District School Board will be consulted regarding their work in this area.

## **Priority 3: To build trust among schools, immigrant students and minority communities, raising awareness of newcomer educational successes, and promoting a shared understanding of newcomer educational challenges and solution pathways**

### **Action 1: Establishing an Education Sector Table communications subgroup**

The communications subgroup aims to build trust between schools and communities; to



communicate that solutions are within reach; to raise awareness of successes; and to promote a more nuanced understanding of the challenges that need to be overcome. To address these goals, the subgroup, supported by the four school boards, mounted a social media campaign during Welcoming Ottawa Week 2015. The campaign targeted school board members and stakeholders, raising awareness of educational successes. It also sought to build support for measures to enhance the graduation rates of immigrant students from low-income neighbourhoods.

The communications subgroup has developed a video affirming the benefits of immigration and intends to sponsor events that complement Welcoming Ottawa Week, but are held at a time that offers a better fit with the school year.

### **Action 2: Building awareness of successful initiatives by the school boards**

This activity is a joint undertaking by the four Ottawa school boards aimed at making immigrant students, newcomer parents, and minority communities aware of successful initiatives to increase student involvement, parental and community engagement, and academic achievement. The project will seek out and promote promising practices.

### **Future plans to address Priority 3**

The Sector Table intends to promote promising practices that relate to mandated elements of Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy. To operationalize this plan, the Table will collect and share school boards' successes on issues that are relevant to the strategy.

In order to assist in the communication of challenges, successes, and promising solution pathways to teachers, employees, and members of the four school boards, the Sector Table intends to become more active in school boards' Parental Involvement Committees, identifying potential speakers and topics. Settlement service provider organizations will be enlisted to participate in the events in order to create opportunities for face-to-face contact. The Table will also promote dialogue between teachers and school administrators, on the one hand, and members of minority ethno-cultural communities, on the other.

### **Priority 4: To develop neighbourhood and school catchment area plans that complement and support school boards' mandates**

No actions were undertaken to support Priority 4. The Priority did not form a part of the focus of the Sector Table in the first period of action.

#### **Future plans to address Priority 4**

The Sector Table intends to emulate and implement the Pathways to Education Model (also called Growing Up Great) in schools with a high proportion of immigrant students. The Table will collaborate with the Pinecrest and Queensway Community Health Centre and the Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative in establishing second, customized Pathways to Education initiative in an Ottawa neighbourhood.

Related to the above initiative, the Sector Table intends to facilitate research and discussion on the learning needs of refugee students in order to help them adapt to school settings and to succeed academically. The focus will be on neighborhoods with high concentrations of newcomers.

Lastly, the Sector Table intends to collaborate with the Health and Wellbeing Sector Table in establishing joint initiatives to help school boards address mental health challenges among newcomer students.

#### **Priority 5: To build evidence regarding the challenges that exist in neighborhoods with high concentration of immigrants and to create multi-sectoral partnerships in support of students' academic success**

Priority 5 did not form part of the original strategic plan established for the Education Sector Table.

#### **Future plans to address Priority 5**

The Sector Table hopes to consult with the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) in order to promote the development and adoption of education indicators that bear on the Table's strategic priorities. These indicators would be available in the public domain. To support this measure, the Sector Table intends to seek the collaboration of academic partners, as well as sponsorship for research in education-related statistics.

The Sector Table also intends to seek Ministry of Education support for mandatory strategies that would be adopted by school boards and educational institutions in order to promote greater diversity among school employees, increased cultural sensitivity in school programs and curricula, and greater parental engagement.

# Language Sector Table

---

## Strategic overview

The ability to communicate effectively and efficiently in the official language of Canada – either English or French – is fundamental to social, civic and economic integration. Newcomers who lack the capacity to speak with, or to understand, neighbours, employers, teachers, doctors, merchants, and service providers, are at profound risk of exclusion, unable to access the ‘good life’, vulnerable to exploitation and illness, and unable to avail themselves of their rights as citizens of Canada and members of their communities. For these reasons, the provision of language services and its acquisition by newcomers must remain central to any and all strategies aimed at creating welcoming communities. Economists estimate that roughly one-third of the difference in economic attainment between newcomers and similarly skilled native-born Canadians can be attributed solely to language difficulties.

The central role played by language in newcomer integration has led it to figure prominently in recent federal policy changes. Selection policies and related administrative practices have significantly elevated the importance of language skills for gaining admission to Canada. Language skills have also become more important for the acquisition of Canadian citizenship, signaling the importance of language not only for economic exchanges, but also for social and civic transactions.

Notwithstanding the central role played by language in newcomer integration, language service providers feel that language training does not receive the attention it merits. They also argue that language services have been especially vulnerable to budget cuts and that a fundamental realignment is needed in national discussions of settlement in order to recognize the centrality of language services.

Five strategic priorities have been selected by the Language Sector Table:

1. To further improve the planning, deployment and quality of federal and provincial language courses so they are complementary and better matched to the needs of Francophone and Anglophone immigrants
2. To improve newcomer access to specialized language training that supports broader community and learner needs;
3. To improve, raise awareness of and extend access to interpretation services for a broad range of legal, justice, health and social related services
4. To promote special language programming for populations at risk of exclusion and ensure language instructors are sensitive to the complex challenges faced by this category of learners

5. To strengthen the capacity of Ottawa language training providers to advocate for improvements in language training, including additional training options, such as on-the-job language training

To address these priorities, the Language Sector Table has identified a series of initiatives, many of which are being pursued in collaboration with other sector tables, including the Health and Wellbeing Sector, the Economic Sector, and the Settlement and Socio-civic Integration Capacity Development Sector.

## **Strategic priorities: Current actions and future plans**

### **Priority 1: To further improve the planning, deployment and quality of federal and provincial language courses so they are complementary and better matched to the needs of Francophone and Anglophone immigrants**

#### **Action 1: Establishing a Centralized Language Assessment and Referral System**

A new centralized capacity for planning and delivering language services in Ottawa was introduced in May 2014: CLARS - Coordinated Language Assessment and Referral System. CLARS is operated by the YMCA-YWCA and is the result of cooperation between the federal and provincial governments and benefits from the input and collaboration of local school boards and Ottawa's settlement sector. The new system aims to improve operational coordination as well as facilitating interactions with stakeholders from other sectors.

#### **Action 2: Raising employer awareness of language benchmarks in order to enhance the returns to language assessments and language training**

Canadian language benchmarks (CLBs) are used to assess the English and French language competencies of newcomers, as well as the language requirements of occupations listed in a national occupational compendium. This allows employers and newcomers to determine the language skills required for particular occupations, as well as providing newcomers with an objective assessment of their competencies.

Notwithstanding its potential value, language benchmarking data is underutilized by employers and human resource professionals who, generally, assess needs and proficiencies subjectively. This results in a systematic underestimation of newcomer language skills due to intercultural communication issues and accents.

The initiative aims to test various methods for raising employer awareness of language benchmarking and encouraging its use. It is being pursued jointly with the Economic Sector Table.

### **Future plans to address Priority 1**

The Sector Table intends to consult with language service providers to get feedback on what is working well and what needs improvement in the CLARS system. The findings will inform discussions with the federal and provincial governments aimed at adjusting the new approach.

Other future plans under Priority 1 are:

- Establishing shared understanding – and monitoring – the equity in the standards of testing, curriculum, teacher qualifications, and training delivery - accorded to the English and French languages.
- Ensuring quality referrals that are attuned to the economic and social integration needs of newcomers
- Providing clear options to clients and enabling them to make well-informed choices regarding language training. To achieve this, multimedia and multi-lingual guides will be developed to:
  - clarify the implications of alternative economic integration pathways
  - Enable newcomers to navigate language benchmarks and associated testing
  - Guide newcomers in how to accelerate and improve their language acquisition through social connections

## **Priority 2: To improve newcomer access to specialized language training that supports broader community and learner needs**

### **Action 1: Language learning and health promotion**

This action is being undertaken in collaboration with the Health and Wellbeing Sector. For details, see Priority 3 – Action 2 – on page 22.

### **Future plans to address Priority 2**

The Sector Table hopes to build on the success of the language learning and health promotion project by extending the lessons to address a range of social, political, and economic concerns. These include:

- Information regarding workplace culture
- Information about accessing suitable and affordable housing, and tenants' rights
- Information about volunteerism and civic and political engagement, including connecting with elected officials

- Information about identifying and connecting with local and neighbourhood networks

The Sector Table will initiate the project by conducting an audit to determine the extent to which current lesson plans impart essential settlement information in various fields.

### **Priority 3: To improve, raise awareness of and extend access to interpretation services for a broad range of legal, justice, health and social related services**

#### **Action 1: Ottawa Language Access (OLA)**

This action is being undertaken in collaboration with the Health and Wellbeing Sector. For a description, see the Health and Wellbeing Sector Table.

#### **Future plans to address Priority 3**

Three additional actions are being contemplated by the Language Sector Table to enhance access to interpreter services:

- To raise the awareness of language training providers regarding the importance of interpretation services.
- To establish a capacity that provides language instructors with access to just-in-time telephone interpretation services to assist in responding to critical problems that are discovered in the course of beginner language training.

### **Priority 4: To promote special language programming for populations at risk of exclusion and ensure language instructors are sensitive to the complex challenges faced by this category of learners**

#### **Action 1: Understanding and addressing gaps in language training for low literacy immigrants**

Notwithstanding the policy shift favoring immigrants with high levels of language proficiency and labour market readiness, there remains a significant flow of newcomers with low levels of literacy and education. This includes parents and grandparents, dependents of skilled migrants, refugees and persons admitted for humanitarian reasons. Because Ottawa receives a disproportionate share of humanitarian and refugee admissions, it has not experienced a significant reduction in the need for customized language training for low literacy immigrants.

The aim of this project is to chart the demand for specialized language training for immigrants with low literacy. Based on the findings of this study, a language training plan for this segment will be developed.

#### **Future plans to address Priority 4**

The Sector Table aims to raise government awareness of the challenges faced by low literacy language learners and to initiate the development of customized testing and language instruction for newcomers with special needs or disabilities. The Sector Table will also seek to persuade government agencies to improve childcare support for immigrants with large families (a particular concern for refugees) who are unable to access language learning because of child care responsibilities.

The Sector Table hopes to instigate professional development training for language instructors in order to help them deal with the complex challenges facing learners with multiple, special needs.

### **Priority 5: To strengthen the capacity of Ottawa language training providers to advocate for improvements in language training, including additional training options, such as on-the-job language training**

#### **Future plans to address Priority 5**

The Sector Table hopes to elevate the priority that is accorded language training by creating a capacity for the sector to advocate with government. There are currently no bodies or organizations filling this role.