

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants

Input on Canada's settlement policy December 2013

OCASI – Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants welcomes the opportunity to provide a written submission to CIC NHQ with further input and suggestions on Canada's settlement policy following the conclusion of the National Settlement Conference Vision 2020.

Canada has a strong tradition of facilitating the settlement and integration of newcomers. It is a tradition that is defined by the federal government's enduring role in settlement and integration services, and depends to a large extent on the efforts of the non-profit and community-based immigrant and refugee-serving sector.

The National Settlement Conference has provided us with the opportunity to recognize what we do well, and build on these accomplishments as we continue to adapt to changes in immigrant selection and the national settlement program.

This submission provides recommendations in seven (7) policy priorities in Ontario, and incorporates elements of OCASI's pre-conference briefing note to Ontario participants, and suggestions submitted by delegates after the conference.

Policy Priority	Recommendation
<p>1. Eligibility</p> <p>Expanding service eligibility is a reasonable response to a number of recent developments such as: the creation of multiple pathways to permanent residency for certain temporary foreign workers (TFW) and international students through the Provincial Nominee Programs and the Canada Experience Class (CEC); the recent increase in application limits for these categories of immigrant selection; and the increase in the number of TFWs in Canada which has exceeded the number of permanent resident arrivals since 2008.</p> <p>A certain number of immigrants continue to need settlement services even after they acquire citizenship. Other citizens who need settlement services are those who left Canada as children and have returned as adults many years later.</p> <p>Providing settlement and integration services to these residents will facilitate faster economic and social integration, a conclusion that is supported by a variety of research, including OCASI's recent Making Ontario Home (MOH) survey. In addition, the sector is at the point where agencies deliver services based on need rather than immigration status. It is time that we revisit the issue of service access for refugee claimants and all migrant workers.</p> <p>We acknowledge the important role of provincial and municipal governments in supporting the settlement and integration of newcomers, and particularly in addressing services gaps created by higher levels of funding. The federal government can support the role of lower levels of governments which typically have far fewer resources, by expanding the national baseline for service eligibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open service access to all that need settlement interventions and support, beginning with Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) and International Students, as well as Refugee Claimants and Citizens.

2. Funding the sector

The federal government through CIC, Multiculturalism, and Employment and Social Development, is the largest funder of immigrant settlement and integration and has an enduring role in the settlement, integration and inclusion of immigrants and refugees.

CIC uses 'Pay for Performance' (P4P) as the only funding model, and the Contribution Agreement (CA) as the only mechanism. Concerns about the model include restriction of the funded agency's autonomy, cash-flow issues, inhibition of innovation and responsiveness, and reinforcement of persistent inequalities through the use of a formula-based rather than needs-based allocation of resources. The current management of slippage in this funding regime requires a lengthy amendment process, and has sometimes resulted in returning unused funds to Treasury Board. Slippage typically results from unexpected HR and other developments, and on the rare occasion because needs have shifted.

While not precluding the possibility of basing funding level formulae on service levels/outputs, this is an opportune moment to look at how the immigrant and refugee-serving sector should be funded.

CIC currently uses a predominantly competitive model. While healthy competition can often act as an impetus for service innovation and excellence, it has also stifled productive partnerships and collaborations where a pooling of expertise by sector agencies can produce effective responses to diverse pre-arrival needs. It is time to look at modifying the current approach to encourage more pro-active partnerships.

Sector agencies have begun to explore social enterprises with varying degrees of success as an avenue to augment current funding, as well as seek to address gaps created by growing needs that are not

- Consider ways to improve the current funding regime which is based on Contribution Agreements including reallocating slippage to service enhancements identified at the beginning of contracting period without going through lengthy amendments; and following up on the "Blue Ribbon Panel" recommendations.
- Explore other funding models such as: provide a certain amount of funding for the delivery of certain services instead of funding based on outcomes only; provide core funding for agencies with expectations for a mix of broad outcomes and specific outputs where relevant; or a mix of the three models depending on the agency, service model in use, or services/ programs delivered; encourage and support the development of partnerships and collaborations to enhance service delivery rather than a competitive selection model.
- Explore policy and regulation changes including to the CA to allow agencies to start social enterprise; work with CRA to develop clear and consistent guidelines on how non-profits and charities can enter into social enterprise.

<p>met due to eligibility limitations. These opportunities are limited due to constraints created by CA conditions and Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) reporting challenges.</p> <p>Social financing as an alternative has been floated as a policy idea by the federal government and here in Ontario by the Ontario Non-Profit Network. The difficult experience in the UK with social finance for social needs encourages us to approach this idea with caution, and thoroughly research the implications for human services. We emphasize the fact that social financing can never fully or partially replace the federal government's responsibility and obligation to finance settlement services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore with extreme caution, the implications of different financing models for human services, such as social financing.
<p>3. Pre and post-arrival services</p> <p>We see providing services overseas prior to arrival (pre-arrival services) to individuals and families chosen as permanent residents as a positive move. The process can be better facilitated through a strong technology infrastructure that would make services more effective, including retaining qualified staff to make relevant content available, and supporting the development of partnerships and other collaborations as needed.</p> <p>It is important to recognize that settlement and integration occurs on a continuum. Settlement needs can and will change upon arrival, and cannot be addressed only at the point of pre-arrival. Sector agencies have the expertise to work with new arrivals in assessment and case-management to address the realities on the ground after arrival in Canada for settlement and integration. This can be maximized by supporting agencies to expand overseas where there is capacity, as well as support them to address integration needs after arrival in Canada.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend current overseas programming until March 31, 2016 and allow for some additional pre-arrival pilots such as on-line services; undertake a comprehensive review of future pre-arrival orientation services including what should be delivered by who, to whom, when and where; and better align pre with post-arrival services. • Invest in technology infrastructure to make pre-arrival services effective, including staffing and supporting partnerships and collaborations.

4. Vulnerable populations

Immigrant selection has been shifting over time to overwhelmingly focus on economic class immigration, with an emphasis on factors such as higher levels of language proficiency and stronger labour market links. Despite these factors, certain newcomer populations face unique and systemic challenges to settlement.

The national settlement program should continue our strong humanitarian tradition of meeting resettlement needs of refugees, and continue to meet the needs of all newcomers, while maintaining a continued strong emphasis on vulnerable populations – individuals and groups that are at higher risk of being marginalized because of social isolation, economic and social exclusion, complex needs, and face significant barriers to successful settlement and integration. The collection and dissemination of disaggregated data will help governments and the sector to understand who benefits from existing services and initiatives and who does not. Since the loss of the long-form census, data disaggregated by race, disability, gender, official language and other relevant factors will help all stakeholders understand who is facing what systemic barriers and lead to more effective policy and program responses.

Addressing systemic challenges to settlement are made more difficult by the fact that Canada lacks a National Childcare Policy or a National Housing Policy. With reference to the former, the taxable Universal Child Care Benefit will not create or make available affordable, regulated child care that can free up newcomer parents to better pursue labour market opportunities and build a new life in Canada.

Canada is one of the few countries in the world without a National Housing Policy. Far too many Canadians are under-housed or homeless, and seniors, low-income families, people with disabilities

- Review Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) pre and post arrival services, orientation materials and curriculum, RAP working group membership and mandate while redefining RAP's core program mandate for the future
- Collect and report out on disaggregated data to better understand who is facing what systemic barriers and who does and not benefit from existing services and initiatives;
- Develop a National Child Care Strategy and a National Housing Strategy. The latter should include a mix of new affordable built spaces, rental subsidies and initiatives for home ownership.
- Reaffirm commitment to resettle 10% of UNHCR resettlement cases and maintain the humanitarian class at 11% of overall immigration to Canada.

<p>and newcomers are over-represented in those numbers. A national housing policy and sustained investment in social housing will facilitate faster settlement of newcomers while benefiting all Canadian residents who face challenges in getting safe and healthy shelter.</p> <p>We are also concerned about the significant decrease in government assisted refugee arrivals over the past two years – the lowest arrival numbers since the late 1970’s. Meanwhile, the UNHCR says there is a growing need for third country resettlement. With the impact of the new asylum legislation and subsequent sharp drop in refugee claimants we must find ways to maintain our commitment to humanitarian populations.</p>	
<p>5. Services in remote and smaller centres</p> <p>We are encouraged by the growing number of newcomers who are choosing to settle in smaller communities. The shift has been related a large extent to jobs, and the growing number of Ontario communities that are working closely with sector agencies through the LIP, and have undertaken initiatives like the newcomer portals.</p> <p>Given this trend, issues of service delivery supports and service accessibility, particularly in large geographic areas and regions with little or no public transportation, are areas of increasing importance.</p> <p>Ontario has good examples of organic movements to address new and emerging needs, including initiatives by stakeholders involved in the Thunder Bay LIP who are using technology in creative ways to serve clients in remote areas. There is a need to support agencies to develop capacity and technology to provide remote services and better understand how the national settlement program can meet these needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore ways to deliver the national settlement program through remote services including tracking and recording use of online services; ensure system links to in-person services where needed; and support agencies to develop capacity and technology to provide remote services.

6. Labour Market Integration and EOI

OCASI's MOH survey found that labour market integration remains the biggest challenge for recent permanent residents. Initiatives like Bridge Training are among the most effective targeted initiatives while settlement services provide the related and necessary supports that enable participants to make best use of such opportunities.

In Ontario, Employment Ontario has created training and labour market access opportunities for newcomers who typically do not qualify for Employment Insurance training and job programs. These initiatives are now at risk with the diversion of funds to the Canada Job Grant, primarily an employer-driven program.

The federal government has an obligation to eliminate systemic barriers to labour market integration. Some of this work is currently being undertaken through initiatives such as the Foreign Credential Recognition Office (FCRO). There is a need to address other systemic barriers such as the unfounded demand by employers for 'Canadian work experience', a practice recently targeted by the Ontario Human Rights Commission. The federal government can undertake a public education campaign to employers to promote the benefit of hiring newcomers.

The change to immigration selection through use of an 'Expression of Interest' (EOI) model would be made more effective by facilitating better linkages between the immigrant and refugee-serving sector and employers. It will require investment in creating sector positions to assist employers with navigating the EOI, particularly small and medium sized employers who do not have the HR capacity to engage in this process in the same way as larger employers.

- Continue investment in initiatives like Bridge Training; renew and reinvest funds in bi-lateral Labour Market Agreements with provinces and territories.
- Address systemic barriers to labour market integration through public education to employers.
- Invest in sector positions to create better linkages between employers and immigrant and refugee-serving sector to make best use of the EOI; and facilitate Francophone immigration through better employer and sector agency linkages.

<p>That will make the best use of the settlement and integration architecture already in place to facilitate hiring and retention. There is a need to ensure Francophone immigration to parts of Canada outside Quebec is sustained in the EOI process, through employer and immigrant-serving agency linkages.</p>	
<p>7. Provinces and municipalities</p> <p>With the repatriation of the remaining bi-lateral immigration agreements (except Quebec), it has become even more important to clearly articulate and sustain the role of provincial, territorial and municipal governments in newcomer settlement and integration.</p> <p>Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) have proved to be a useful model of engagement that brings all stakeholders to the same table for long and short-term planning for settlement and integration. Community agencies and municipalities would need ongoing investment in LIPs to sustain their current formal relationship the benefit of newcomers as well a local communities and economies. Long-term funding for LIPs could be sustained for sector agencies where relevant, potentially as part of a ‘core funding’ arrangement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore ways of developing and maintaining ongoing formal relationships with provincial, territorial and municipal governments for immigrant settlement; explore ways to sustain the LIPs models, including through funding sector agencies where relevant in a core funding arrangement.