

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

to facilitate the integration of Francophone immigrants in Ontario



Programs
and Services for
Immigrants



Ontario

Office of Francophone Affairs

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GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

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Existing Programs

The Government of Ontario offers a range of programs and services aimed at helping newcomers to become established in the province.

Some of these programs and services are of special interest to French-speaking immigrant and refugee communities. These provincial programs and services can be grouped into seven broad categories:

- Education and training
- Employment
- Entrepreneurship
- Health
- Housing
- Legal services
- Programs and services for women

The main programs and services in each of these categories are described on the following pages.

Please note that only programs offered by the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada must be available in French. Services offered by the municipal and private sectors are not subject to the French Language Services Act but may choose to offer certain services in French.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING



Apprenticeship

- Apprenticeship is an effective training method used world-wide to respond to employer needs in many sectors. This approach enables individuals working in a trade (tradespeople) to transfer their knowledge and skills to apprentices in the workplace. In Canada, apprenticeship training is one of the few ways of acknowledging practical training in the field and providing a Certificate of Qualification, which improves worker mobility. Educational institutions such as community colleges (colleges of applied arts and technology) and union and/or employer-sponsored training centres deliver theoretical training.
- The Ontario government registers apprentices, counsels apprentices and employers, supervises training, administers examinations, issues certificates, creates interprovincial programs, and promotes training. Some 250 employees offer these services in 26 offices in every part of the province.
- The government regulates training in 130 specialised trades. Apprenticeship is mandatory for 20 of these trades; workers must register as apprentices or hold a provincial Certificate of Qualification to work in their chosen trade. The province currently has some 52,000 apprentices.
- The Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) helps high school students to complete their education while working part-time as registered apprentices.
- In Ontario, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities operates workplace support offices that help tradespeople to have their skills and experience in a trade recognised or register in an apprenticeship program. Tradespeople who have enough experience in a trade to meet the requirements for Ontario and who pass a written examination receive a Certificate of Qualification.

Useful Contacts and Links

To learn about the apprenticeship programs, call the local office of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU):

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/training/apprenticeship/skills/officelocations.html>

Phone: 1 888 562-4769 (toll-free) or 416 326-5656 (Toronto) 1 888 562-4769

To learn more about apprenticeships, visit the MTCU Web site at:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/training/apprenticeship/appren.html>

For foreign-trained tradespeople:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/training/foreign.html>

Phone: 1 800 387-5514 (toll-free) or 416 325-2929 (Toronto)

Other programs in the area of learning a trade

- The Ontario Women's Directorate, which is part of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, has a mandate to encourage women to participate fully in all aspects of life in the province through the following initiatives:
 - Training initiatives for women in specialised trades;
 - Career decision-making for young women (to enable them to make constructive career and life choices);
 - Joint project of the Professional Engineers of Ontario, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), the NSERC-Nortel Chair for Women in Science and Engineering in Ontario, and the Ontario Women's Directorate to improve the learning environment in the 13 engineering faculties in Ontario: *Women into Engineering*;
 - A training program for women in information technology;
 - Economic development for women in rural areas.

Useful Contacts and Links

Please speak to a ministry advisor by calling 1 800 267-7329 (toll-free) or 416 327-2422 (Toronto) or visit the Ministry Web site at:

<http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/english/index.html>

Academic Credential Evaluation

- World Education Services (WES) is a not for profit organization dedicated to providing accurate and reliable assessments of academic credentials earned outside Canada and the United States. Its mission is to facilitate the integration of internationally trained individuals into the employment and education environment of their new country.
- In 2000, WES signed an agreement with the Government of Ontario to become the mandated provincial service provider for academic credential evaluation and to provide its services to immigrants, employers, educational institutions, and professional regulatory bodies.
- WES evaluates the academic credentials of individuals who request an individual assessment or upon request from educational institutions, lawyers, businesses, and professional regulatory bodies to meet the following needs:
 - university admission and placement
 - employment
 - professional licensing and certification
 - immigration
- Evaluators employed by WES have extensive experience and an in-depth knowledge of education systems here in Canada and abroad. WES evaluators are fluent in many foreign languages and are aware of the challenges and concerns of their internationally trained clientele. WES staff speak many languages such as French, Amharic, Arabic, Chinese, German, Greek, Hindi, Hebrew, Italian, Farsi, Russian, and Spanish.
- Each year, WES provides evaluations to thousands of individuals and has arrangements with 220 institutional end-users such as the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario, Certified General Accountants of Ontario, the National Dental Hygiene Certification Board and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' Workplace Training Branch.

Useful Contacts and Links

The WES Web site is: www.wes.org/ca

Phone: 1 866 343-0070 (toll-free) or 416 972-0070 (Toronto)

Online Resources for Internationally Trained Individuals

Career Maps

- The Government of Ontario is working with occupational regulatory bodies to produce Career Maps on licensure and certification requirements as well as labour market conditions in regulated professions in the province for use by prospective immigrants and newcomers to Ontario.
- Developed in partnership with the occupational regulatory bodies, Career Maps provide detailed and step-by-step information on the assessment process, examinations and costs involved, and summary of labour market conditions. They also include the relevant mailing address, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail and website addresses.

Useful Contacts and Links

Career Maps on entry-to-practice requirements for fourteen professions and five trades are available through Ontario's Opening Doors website:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/postsec/openingdoors/apt/occfact.html>

Bridging Projects

- The government supports the development of bridge training projects for internationally trained individuals in strategic sectors. These projects develop ways to assess existing skills and competencies, provide training and Canadian workplace experience, and help qualified individuals move quickly into the labour market without duplicating what they have already learned.

Useful Contacts and Links

Information sheets on specific bridging projects are available through Ontario's Opening Doors website:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/postsec/openingdoors/apt/bridge.html>

Financial support for postsecondary students

- Financial assistance for postsecondary students is available through a variety of programs funded by the Province of Ontario and by the Government of Canada. Program policies are established by the funding agency in question. Program processes and terms and conditions are developed jointly by both levels of government.
- Full-time students may be eligible for an integrated student loan. The Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario fund the Canada-Ontario Integrated Student Loan. Because this loan is integrated, applicants are only required to complete one application form and, if eligible, they will receive only one loan certificate. Part-time students are also eligible for a loan, funded by the Government of Canada. In addition, each level of government has other student financial assistance programs in the form of grants or scholarships. For these programs, separate application forms may be required.

Financial support for full-time students

- In Ontario, the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) administers student financial assistance programs on behalf of the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario. Generally, OSAP is responsible for providing students with the tools and information they need to apply for assistance as well as assessing students for the level of financial assistance that is available from each of the programs and providing a mechanism for the release of funding (e.g., loan document, payment to reduce debt load).

- OSAP works in partnership with financial aid offices at Ontario postsecondary institutions. These offices play a vital role in the administration of student financial assistance, by acting as a student's direct resource for questions and issues. The main point of contact for students attending postsecondary institutions in Ontario is the financial aid office at the institution the student is attending. The Student Support Branch of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities acts as the financial aid office for students attending out-of-province postsecondary institutions.

Useful Contacts and Links

The National Student Loans Service Centre (NSLSC) is another partner in the administration of financial assistance in Ontario. The NSLSC :

NSLSC – Public Institution Division: 1 888 815-4514

NSLSC – Private Institution Division: 1 866 587-7452

- Processes loan certificates;
- Arranges for loan funds to be deposited into a student's bank account;
- Helps the student keep track of the amount of the loan and the amount that must be repaid;
- Administers interest-relief and debt reduction in repayment programs;
- Works with the student to set up a loan repayment schedule.

Financial support for part-time students:

- The Canadian Part-time Student Loan and Canada Study Grant programs are funded solely by the Government of Canada and administered in Ontario by OSAP. Policies with respect to eligibility, amounts, conditions for repayment, etc. are established by the federal government.
- This program offers loans to eligible students who are pursuing an education on a part-time basis, i.e., 20% to 59% of a full course load. Disabled students must be taking 20% to 39% of a full course load.

Useful Contacts and Links

Further information regarding eligibility requirements for student loans can be found on the OSAP Web site: <http://osap.gov.on.ca/>

Full-time students must complete an OSAP application. Applications are available by visiting the following Web site: <http://osap.gov.on.ca/> or at the financial aid offices of universities and colleges of applied arts and technology in Ontario.

Part-time students must use the Part-Time Canada Student Loan application form or High-Need Part-Time Canada Study Grant application form, both of which are available at the financial aid offices of postsecondary institutions and by visiting the following Web site: <http://osap.gov.on.ca>

For information about the part-time student loan program, eligibility requirements, and loan amounts please visit the Part-Time Canada Student Loan Program Web site: <http://canlearn.ca/>

Phone: 1 866 330-3331

Protected Persons:

- Protected Persons are eligible to apply for both federal and provincial student assistance.

Useful Contacts and Links

The OSAP Web site has more information regarding the eligibility of protected persons at the following address: <http://osap.gov.on.ca>

Distance Education (secondary education)

- The Independent Learning Centre (ILC) offers distance education in French and English to residents of Ontario who wish to earn credits leading to a diploma, to improve their basic skills or to take personal enrichment courses.
- Students may begin a course and receive their high school diploma at any time during the year and study at their own pace. Their work is marked by Ontario certified teachers.
- Courses offered :
 - Secondary level: a wide range of credit courses from the Ontario curriculum.
 - Basic adult education: non-credit courses (literacy, English, and mathematics).
- Courses are available in print format as well as in a limited number through on-line delivery.
- On-line services are also available such as homework help through *SOS Devoirs* and through the website “macarriere” which can help students chart their educational paths and explore career options.
- To enrol in an ILC credit course, applicants must meet the following conditions:
 - – 16 years of age or older and not attending secondary school;
 - – An Ontario resident;
 - – Canadian citizenship, landed immigrant status, resident status with a work permit, diplomatic visa, or ministerial refugee permit or refugee claimant status, and the ability to present official proof of this status.
- ILC services are available directly in Toronto or at TVOntario’s headquarters, 2180 Yonge Street which offers:
 - ILC application forms and course directories;
 - Counselling services;
 - Assistance in choosing the appropriate courses.

Useful Contacts and Links

For more information on ILC courses, please visit the Web site: www.ilc.org

Phone: 416 484-2722 (Toronto) or 1 800 265-0454 (toll-free).

For more information on SOS Devoirs, please visit the Web site: www.sosdevoirs.org
or phone: 416 397-2094 (Toronto) or 1 866 627-0609 (toll-free)

Literacy and Basic Skills

- The Ministry of Colleges, Training and Universities administers the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program to support literacy organisations whose purpose is to help individuals to improve their reading and writing skills. The program is intended for adults who need help to improve their skills in reading and writing.
- The program is delivered by school boards, colleges, and community organisations that have signed a contract to this effect. More than 55,000 adults receive services from Ministry-sponsored agencies. Some forty agencies deliver literacy and basic skills services to the Francophone community in Ontario.
- Services include information and referral, literacy evaluation, a training plan, training and follow-up. The range of services offered in a community is based on local needs and is described in the literacy services plan.
- The LBS Program is geared to individuals who are unemployed, especially those who are in the Ontario Works program. To be eligible for the LBS Program learners must be out of school and their reading and writing skill level must be below a level that would make it possible to find and keep a job or to meet the day-to-day requirements of daily living.
- There are four umbrella organisations in Ontario that support various literacy initiatives. The *Coalition francophone pour l'alphabétisation et la formation de base en Ontario* supports Francophone communities to create the conditions required for the entire population to become fully literate.
- *Centre FORA* is a Francophone centre that:
 - Provides quality services in the area of adult basic education, with expertise in publishing, research, and the development of learning materials;
 - Plays a leadership role in the field of adult basic education;
 - Produces and distributes quality educational products that meet the needs of the clientele.
- *Centre Alpha Plus* serves both practitioners and organisations working in the Deaf, Native, Francophone, and Anglophone literacy field in Ontario. Its objective is to help its users find resources and information that will enrich the education of adults participating in literacy programs.

Useful Contacts and Links

The Ministry of Colleges, Training and Universities has introduced a Training Hotline to answer questions about training, including the LBS Program, and to provide contact information for literacy organisations in the province: 1 800 387-5656 or 416 326-5656 (Toronto).

Coalition Web site: www.coalition.on.ca

Phone: (613) 842-5369 or 1 877 464-0504 (toll-free)

Centre Alpha Plus Web site: <http://alphaplus.ca/eng.asp>

Phone : 416 322-1012 (Toronto) or 1 800 788-1120 (toll-free)

Centre FORA Web site : www.centrefora.on.ca

Phone : 1 888 814-4422 (toll-free)

English as a Second Language (ESL)

- English as a Second Language (ESL) classes can be offered through the public and separate (or Catholic) boards of education, community non-profit agencies and colleges. You may hear English classes referred to as ESL or LINC. (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada)
- If you are not sure where to begin looking for ESL classes that meet your needs, you can first go to the Language Assessment Centre in your community. If you are a refugee claimant, you are not eligible for this service. Some ESL classes are offered during the day. Others are offered in the evening or on the weekend.
- There are also specialty ESL classes available such as ESL for business, ESL and job search and English literacy development (ELD) programs.

You can find information about language classes at:

- Settlement agencies
- Your local board of education or school
- Community colleges
- Universities
- Community immigrant services organizations
- Public libraries

Useful Contacts and Links

Language Assessment Centres:

Web Site: http://www.settlement.org/site/LL/language_assess.asp

Telephone: (613) 230-7729

For the list of schools or School Boards close to you, please visit:

Web Site: <http://sbinfo.edu.gov.on.ca/>

For more information on other institutions offering ESL, please visit the following Web site: <http://www.settlement.org/index.html>

French as a Second Language (FSL)

You can also have access to French as a Second Language training through:

- The *Alliances Françaises in Canada*
- Postsecondary institutions
- School Boards

Useful Contacts and Links

Alliance Française: Web site: <http://www.af.ca/>

For the list of schools or School Boards close to you, please visit:

Web site: <http://sbinfo.edu.gov.on.ca/>

Canada Language Council: <http://www.c-l-c.ca/index.html>

English and French as a Second Language Web site : www.langcanada.ca

EMPLOYMENT



On-line job search

The Ontario WorkinfoNet Web site:

- This bilingual Web site consists of a directory of links to a multitude of sites that deal with careers and employment. Ontario *WorkinfoNet* is a great on-line search tool for learning about employment, careers, and the labour market specifically in Ontario.
- Use the Web site to:
 - find a job;
 - Plan your career;
 - Upgrade your education;
 - Find training courses;
 - Research the labour market.
- To make searching easier, the 2000 links have been grouped into seven categories (and many subcategories) so that only the most relevant sites appear. There is an emphasis on local information to help Ontarians find jobs, careers, and learning opportunities in their own backyard.

Useful Contacts and Links

Ontario *WorkinfoNet* Web site: www.on.info-emploi.ca

Phone: (705) 254-6943

The IPS (Inventory of Programs and Services) Web site:

- The IPS Web site is a bilingual site that provides access to a complete database of federal and provincial employment programs and services. This tool is useful to job seekers, employment service providers, community organisations, and the general public.
- IPS can help job seekers find programs and services in their community to help them enter or re-enter the workforce.

- The information in the IPS database has been provided by the organisation that has been identified as responsible for the delivery of the program or service in question.

Useful Contacts and Links

The Web site for employment in various regions of the province is:

<http://www.iwin.on.ca/>

A Web site that posts resources specifically for immigrants is:

<http://www.on.workinfont.ca/> (Do Search by User Type "Immigrant").

Phone (705) 254-6943

IPS Web site is: <http://ips.iwin.ca/>

Phone : 1 888 562-4769

Job Connect

- The Job Connect program is designed for individuals who need help in achieving sustainable employment. It offers a range of services to respond to the employment needs of individuals and skilled labour needs of employers and can help individuals on a path to higher skills training and employment. Services for young people are available across Ontario. Services for adults are available in some communities.
- Through this program:
 - Individuals looking for work can obtain information on careers and occupations, the local job market, training opportunities, and job search strategies;
 - Individuals who need support in looking for work can receive help with identifying skills, setting objectives, developing training plans, and searching for a job;
 - Employers may be able to reduce costs associated with training a new employee.

- The program has three components:
 - The **Information and Resource Service** provides information on careers and occupations, the local labour market, training opportunities and job search strategies.
 - **Employment Planning and Preparation** helps people to clarify their employment needs, establish short and long term goals, develop an action plan and search for a job.
 - **Job Development Placement Supports** helps people develop their skills and gain experience through on-the-job training opportunities.
- **The Information and Resource Service** is a walk-in, self-directed community resource centre open to anyone seeking employment and/or training and education information and resources.
- **Employment Planning and Preparation** services provide assistance to people who are at least 16 years old, out of school and out of work, and not receiving Employment Insurance benefits.
- **Job Development Placement Supports** assists people who are at least 16 years of age, out of school, out of work, not currently in a training program, and not receiving Employment Insurance benefits. If over 24 years of age, participants must be receiving Ontario Works benefits, Ontario Disability Support Program benefits or be unemployed for a minimum of 6 months.
- Employers who operate a business in Ontario who are looking to hire staff, ready to provide on-the-job training and/or seeking people who want to work, may benefit from **Job Connect**. The program's Apprenticeship Signing Bonuses are also available to employers willing to support a qualifying candidate's apprenticeship registration and provides apprenticeship training.

Useful Contacts and Links

To learn more about the organisations that offer this program in their area, individuals may call the JOBGROW Hotline at 1 888 JOB-GROW (toll-free) or 416 326-5656 (Toronto).

Job Connect Web site: www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/training/cepp/aboutjc.html

Phone : 1 888 562-4769 (free-toll)

Ontario Works

This program is offered by the municipalities.

- The **Ontario Works** program provides financial assistance and income support to people in temporary financial need. People receiving assistance through Ontario Works participate in a wide range of activities which help them to prepare for, find, and keep a job.
- The Ontario Works program provides different types of assistance, because different people have different needs:
 - **Practical help finding a job:** Workshops on looking for work, résumé writing, and preparing for an interview. Referrals to job counselling or training. Access to telephones, faxes, computers, and job banks. Information on who is hiring now.
 - **Community placement:** A community placement helps individuals to contribute to their community and get current experience. It provides them with a chance to practise their skills, build their confidence, and develop up-to-date job references and contacts.
 - **Basic education:** Ontario Works can offer support to individuals to complete high school, improve language skills, and upgrade reading, writing or math skills.
 - **Job skills training:** Ontario Works can help open the door to the skills needed for today's job market – training for a specific job, on-the-job or co-op training, special skills programs or special certificate courses.
 - **Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP):** The purpose of this program is to help young parents aged 16 to 21 who haven't finished high school by providing support to complete their diplomas, get tutoring help, learn parenting skills, cover child care costs, pay school expenses, and find work.
 - **Employment placement:** If a participant is ready for a job, Ontario Works can help through direct connections to employers who are hiring, information on how to prepare for an interview, and job training. There is also help if a participant has ideas about starting a business.
 - **Earnings exemptions:** Part-time work is often the first step towards a full-time job. Individuals working on a part-time basis are eligible for a number of exemptions that allow them to earn income and continue to receive social assistance – until they have enough income to provide for themselves and their family. Individuals may also be able to deduct some of their child care costs.

- **Help with expenses:** Program participants are eligible for a start-up benefit related to getting ready for work and taking part in Ontario Works employment activities. Ongoing help with expenses (transportation, work clothing, equipment, and child care costs) is also available while participating in Ontario Works programs.
- To apply to Ontario Works, call the nearest office for help in starting the application process.

Useful Contacts and Links

Phone : 1 888 789-4199 (toll-free) or 416 325-5666 (Toronto)

Site Web :

www.cfcs.gov.on.ca/CFCS/en/programs/IES/OntarioWorks/default.htm

ENTREPRENEURSHIP



Starting a Business

- A network of Small Business Enterprise Centres across Ontario focus on providing support to start-up and small enterprises during their first through fifth years of operation. Entrepreneurs are provided with easy access to business consulting services and information covering management, marketing, technology and financing.
- Each Small Business Enterprise Centre offers one-stop convenience for a wide variety of support resources including:
 - Free start-up consultations with a qualified business consultant.
 - Review of business plans.
 - Consultations through a lawyer/accountant referral service.
 - Up-to-date, leading-edge information: booklets, pamphlets, brochures, articles.
 - Access to current resource materials, including directories, trade indexes and books that can be used on-site.
 - Workshops and seminars.
 - Guidance on licenses, permits, registration, regulations and other forms and documents required to start and build a business.
 - Import and export information.
 - Information on patents, copyright and trademarks.
 - Mentoring and networking opportunities.
 - Internet and computer access for business research and planning.

Useful Contacts and Links

To call or visit the nearest Small Business Enterprise Centre, look in the blue pages of your community's phone directory. Or visit www.ontariocanada.com for a list of locations of Small Business Enterprise Centres.

Business Advisory Services

- The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade's 11 business advisory services offices provide assistance to existing innovative, growth-oriented firms, associations and municipalities.
- The Ministry's Business Development Consultants work with companies by assessing their current situation, supporting development of future plans and providing options for achieving their goals. They link firms with the right people, information and business resources to enhance competitiveness and profitability.

Useful Contacts and Links

The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade provides these services in Central, Southwestern, and Eastern Ontario. Contact the nearest office by looking in the blue pages of your local telephone directory, or call toll-free 1 866 668-4249.

In Northern Ontario, contact the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, toll-free at 1 800 461-2287 or fax (705) 945-5931.

You can also consult the following websites for more information:

www.ontariocanada.com

www.mndm.gov.on.ca

Young Entrepreneurs

- The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade offers the following programs aimed at young people to encourage them to choose entrepreneurship as a career, and equip them with the tools to succeed:
- **Summer Company** – Hands-on business training and mentoring, together with awards of up to \$3,000 to help you start up and run your own summer business.
- **My Company** – This program combines hands-on business training and the availability of competitive loans of up to \$15,000 to help you start and run your own business.
- **Future Entrepreneurs** – a program that introduces an entrepreneurial mind-set and skills to students in Grades 7 and 8.
- **Ontario Secondary School Business Plan Competition** – The province's network of Small Business Enterprise Centres hold local business plan competitions in the communities they serve.

Useful Contacts and Links

Information about entrepreneurship for young people can be found at the Youth Jobs Web site: www.youthjobs.gov.on.ca.

Information Consulting

- The Canada-Ontario Business Service Centre (COBSC) provides access to accurate, timely and relevant information on federal and provincial business-related programs, services and regulations. There are 78 business centres throughout the province that provide COBSC services.
- In order to serve as a first-stop for business information, the COBSC has established co-operative arrangements with all levels of government and its agencies as well as non-government organizations to administer business-related programs and services.

Useful Contacts and Links

Telephone: (416) 775-3456 or 1 800 567-2345; Fax: (416) 954-8597; e-mail: info@cobsc.org. The COBSC Web site is: www.cbosc.org

Also visit www.serviceontario.ca, a comprehensive Web site with valuable links to information and services related to business and entrepreneurship.

HEALTH



Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP)

- Ontario residents are eligible for provincially funded health coverage (OHIP). To be eligible for Ontario health coverage, you must:
 - Be a Canadian citizen or have immigration status as set out in Ontario’s *Health Insurance Act*;
 - Make your permanent and principal home in Ontario;
 - Be in Ontario for at least 153 days of the first 183 days immediately following the date you establish as residency in Ontario; and,
 - Be physically present in Ontario for 153 days in any 12-month period.
- OHIP coverage normally becomes effective three months after the date you establish residency in Ontario. The Ministry strongly encourages new and returning residents to purchase private health insurance in case they become ill during the OHIP waiting period.
- A resident of Ontario must have a health card to show that he or she is entitled to health care services paid for by OHIP. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care pays for a wide range of services; however, it does not pay for services that are not medically necessary, such as cosmetic surgery. Because health care providers must validate the health card numbers of the people they treat, it is important to carry your health card with you at all times. Whether you have a red and white health card or a photo health card, remember to carry it with you.
- Most of your Ontario health benefits are covered across Canada. The province or territory you are visiting will usually bill the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care directly for hospital and physician services. In Quebec, you may have to pay for physician services and then submit your receipt to your local ministry office for payment.

Useful Contacts and Links

The main Web site for the Ontario Health Insurance Plan is:

<http://www.gov.on.ca/health/indexf.html>

For more information about immigration status matters and Ontario Health Insurance, visit the following Web site:

www.gov.on.ca/health/french/programf/ohipf/ohipfaq_mnf.html

Phone : 1 888 376-5197 (toll-free) or 416-314-2603 (Toronto)

TTY 1 800 387-5559 (toll-free)

French-language Health Services

- In Ontario, most direct health care services are provided by agencies such as public hospitals, nursing homes, and mental health programs.
- Agencies designated under the *French Language Services Act* have been recognised by an Order-in-Council (by Regulation) as able to provide high-quality French-language services.
- The French-language Services Office works closely with the network of regional French-language health service coordinators who, in turn, work with local agencies to maintain and improve services in French.

Useful Contacts and Links

- The Web site for the French-language Health Services Office is:

http://www.gov.on.ca/health/french/programf/flhsf/flhs_mnf.html

Phone : 416 327-8975 (Toronto)

- The Web site with information about French health care resources is:

www.gov.on.ca/health/french/programf/flhsf/ressources/french_ressources_mnf.html

Phone : 416 327-8975 (Toronto)

- The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Web site is:

<http://www.gov.on.ca/health/indexf.html>

Phone : 1 800 268-1154 (toll-free) or 416 314-5518 (Toronto)

TTY 1 800 387-5559 (toll-free)

Telehealth Ontario

- Telehealth Ontario is a free, confidential telephone service that you can call to get health advice or general health information from a Registered Nurse.
- A call to Telehealth Ontario will give you confidential advice in French about any health-related concerns such as:
 - Symptoms that could require medical attention;
 - Illness or injury;
 - Chronic diseases;
 - Nutrition and healthy lifestyles;
 - Youth health and lifestyle issues.

Useful Contacts and Links

Free access to a Registered Nurse 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:
1 866 797-0000 (toll-free) – TTY 1 866 797-0007 (toll-free)

Note: Calling Telehealth Ontario is not the same as calling 911. That's always the first number you should call in an emergency.

HOUSING



The Tenant Protection Act

- In Ontario, the *Tenant Protection Act, 1997*, gives landlords and tenants specific rights and obligations. This is not the only law in Ontario that gives landlords and tenants rights and obligations; they are also subject to other laws that set out specific rights and obligations. These laws include the *Human Rights Code*, the *Condominium Act*, the *Co-operative Corporations Act*, and the *Fire Safety and Prevention Act*.
- The *Act* confers rights and obligations in the following areas:
 - Maintenance and repairs;
 - Privacy and entry;
 - Rent and other fees and charges: rent deposits, illegal charges, receipts. These rules also apply to mobile home parks and land lease communities, care homes;
 - Rent increases: the rent increase guideline, a rent increase above the guideline, maximum rent and notices and applications;
 - Rent reductions: reduced or discontinued service, decrease in municipal taxes, rent reduction;
 - Security of tenure: renewing a tenancy, assignment and sublet, termination by agreement, termination of tenancy by a tenant, termination of tenancy by a landlord.

Useful Contacts and Links

This Web site includes links of all of the above topics: <http://www.orht.gov.on.ca>
Phone : 1 888 332-3234 (toll-free) or 416 645-8080 (Toronto)

Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal

- The Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal was created with the enactment of the *Tenant Protection Act, 1997*. Its mission is to resolve disputes between residential landlords and tenants by providing public education, mediation, and adjudication services in a fair and timely manner.
- The Tribunal's Customer Service Representatives provide information about the rights and obligations of tenants and landlords under the *Tenant Protection Act, 1997*, and the Tribunal's operations and procedures. These representatives are based in the Tribunal's offices throughout the province.
- The Tribunal has also a team of mediators who work with landlords and tenants to resolve certain types of disputes through mutual agreement.

Useful Contacts and Links

To contact a Customer Service Representative, phone the toll-free information service at 416 645-8080 from within Toronto or 1 888 332-3234 (Toll free).

Representatives are available Monday to Friday, except holidays, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Visit any of the Tribunal's offices throughout Ontario during the same hours.

The Tribunal's Web site is: www.orht.gov.on.ca

LEGAL SERVICES



Legal Aid Ontario

- Legal assistance is available to low income individuals and disadvantaged communities for a variety of legal problems, including criminal matters, family disputes, immigration and refugee hearings, landlord/tenant disputes, disability support, and family benefits payments.
- A network of 79 independent, community-based legal aid clinics funded by Legal Aid Ontario offer economically disadvantaged people law services, such as helping people to obtain or maintain social assistance benefits.
- Legal Aid Ontario also provides the services of private-sector lawyers to individuals without a lawyer to represent them before criminal, family or youth courts.
- Legal Aid offers different kinds of services, depending on a client's needs. These services are available through the certificate program, which entitles clients to receive advice and representation by private lawyers or by Legal Aid staff lawyers. To apply for a Legal Aid certificate, you must attend in person at a local Legal Aid office. If you are eligible, you can get a Legal Aid certificate that you can take to the lawyer of your choice. Legal assistance is also available through the community legal clinic program.
- Every Ontario resident who needs legal assistance can apply. Eligibility for Legal Aid is based on financial need and the nature of the case. Applicants may pay nothing or a portion of the cost of Legal Aid, depending on their financial situation.

Useful Contacts and Links

Phone : 416 979-1446 (Toronto) or 1 800 668-8258 (toll-free)

Web site: <http://www.legalaid.on.ca/en/>

The Ontario Human Rights Commission

- The Ontario *Human Rights Code* protects people in Ontario against discrimination in obtaining employment, housing, goods, services and facilities, and membership in vocational associations and trade unions.

- There are 16 grounds of discrimination under the *Code*: race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed (religion), sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, handicap, age (18 to 65 in employment and 16 and over in occupancy of accommodation), marital status, family status, same-sex partnership status, welfare recipients (in accommodation only), and record of offences (in employment only).
- The role of the Ontario Human Rights Commission is to administer the *Code*. The Commission is an arm's length agency of the government that reports to the Legislature through the Attorney General.
- The Commission's mandate under the *Code* includes: investigating complaints of discrimination and harassment; making efforts to settle complaints between parties; preventing discrimination through public education and public policy; and looking into situations where discriminatory behaviour exists.
- Initial contact with the public is through a one-window service for inquiry and intake. Specially trained staff are able to respond to inquiries from the public and determine if the issues raised by them relate to the *Code* or if they should be referred to another government agency.
- The Commission's automated phone system enables the public to have access to information services staff, a mediation and inquiry staff directory, automated general information about the services offered by the Commission, and information regarding the process of filing a human rights complaint.
- If an individual does have a complaint that falls into the area of human rights and he or she wishes to file a complaint, a questionnaire and an information kit are sent to that person the same day or within 24 hours. This questionnaire is to be completed and returned to the Commission; it will be used by the Commission to prepare a legally-acceptable complaint under the terms of the *Code*.

Useful Contacts and Links

Phone: 416 326-9511 (Toronto) or 1 800 387-9080 (toll-free)

Web site: www.ohrc.on.ca/english/index.shtml

Ombudsman Ontario

- The Ombudsman's role is to investigate complaints about provincial government agencies. When he finds something wrong, he can make recommendations to resolve the problem and if these are not acted upon, he can report the case to the Legislature. The Ombudsman can also help resolve complaints informally. He is an officer of the provincial Legislature who is independent of the government and political parties.
- The Ombudsman has jurisdiction over all provincial government agencies as an office of last resort. All available complaint and appeal procedures must be exhausted before the Ombudsman conducts an investigation. Examples of complaints that may be investigated:
 - Drivers' licences;
 - Health insurance (OHIP);
 - Disability benefits;
 - Workplace safety and insurance;
 - Family Responsibility Office;
 - Treatment of inmates;
 - Access to government services;
 - Patient care in provincial psychiatric hospitals.
- Complaints can be made in writing, by telephone, TTY, fax, email or cassette recording. The Ombudsman can also be reached through the Web site. Services are available in French and English, and arrangements can be made for an interpreter for services in other languages. All complaints are handled in the strictest confidence.

Useful Contacts and Links

Phone: 416 586-3300 (Toronto) or 1 800 387-2620 (toll-free)

Web site: www.ombudsman.on.ca

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR WOMEN



Help for Assaulted Women and Women in Crisis

- Many agencies in Ontario offer services to women of all ages who have experienced, live with or are in fear of violence. All these services offer free, confidential support.
 - ***A province-wide helpline*** is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. It offers crisis counselling and referrals for women needing shelter, legal advice or other supports. This service is free and is available in over 100 different languages.
 - ***Women's shelters*** offer safe, temporary residence for women and their children escaping violence. Shelter services include individual and group supportive counselling, safety planning, community referrals, crisis telephone counselling, outreach, education and support for women during and after their stays.
 - ***Sexual Assault and Rape Crisis Centres*** offer a wide variety of services to victims and survivors of sexual violence. Services include a 24-hour anonymous crisis/support telephone line, individual and group counselling, court, police and hospital accompaniment, information on the legal system, and community referrals. French-language services are available in certain designated areas.
 - ***Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Care and Treatment Centres*** provide 24-hour emergency medical and nursing care to women, men, and children who have recently been victims of sexual assault and/or domestic violence. Services include testing for pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, administration of the evidence kit, medical follow-up, crisis intervention for immediate emotional support, and referral to appropriate community-based agencies.

Useful Contacts and Links

Call 911 or your local police immediately if you are in danger.

The Assaulted Women's Helpline: 1-800-561-2002 (toll-free) or 416 863-0511 (Toronto)

Web site for shelters: www.shelternet.ca/splashpage.cfm

Web site for sexual assault/rape crisis centres:

<http://www.womennet.ca/directory.php?browse&441>

Web site for sexual assault and domestic violence care and treatment centres:
www.satcontario.com or phone: 416 323-6400, extension 4472

Web site with a lot of useful information for women in crisis:
<http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/owd/english/assaulted/morehelp.html>

Provincial victim's support line: 1 888 579-2888

- **French-language helplines:**

Oasis centre des femmes: Elle écoute (toll-free) Southern Ontario 1 877 679-2229 or Toronto 416 657-2229

Centre Victoria pour femmes: Fem-Aide (toll-free) Northern Ontario 1 877 336-2433 or TTY: 1 866 860-7082 or Sudbury: (705) 677-0001 or TTY: 705 670-0019

Eastern Ontario (613 area code): *Fem-écoute*: 1 877 679-2229

Economic Independence

- The Government of Ontario is committed to women's full participation in all aspects of life in this province. As part of this commitment, the government promotes women's active participation in the economy – enhancing their ability to create jobs and other opportunities for themselves and others, throughout their lives.
- The Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD) accomplishes this goal with the cooperation of educators, businesses, and business associations in three directly linked ways:
 - By supporting women's participation in skilled trades;
 - By supporting innovative programs that encourage career decision-making for young women to enable them to make constructive life choices;
 - By supporting entrepreneurship by women.

Useful Contacts and Links

Web site for specialised professions and trades:
www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/owd/english/economic/skilled.htm

Web site for career choices for young women:
www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/owd/english/economic/career.htm

Web site for entrepreneurship by women:
www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/owd/english/economic/entrepreneur.htm
Phone: 416 314-0300 (collect call)

Early Years Centres

- The Government of Ontario has created Ontario Early Years Centres to offer a place where parents and caregivers can get answers to questions, learn about programs and services that are available for young children, and have an opportunity to talk to early years professionals, as well as to other parents and caregivers in the community.
- A wide range of free services is available:
 - Early learning programs, including literacy programs for parents and children;
 - Programs to help and support parents and caregivers in all aspects of early childhood development;
 - Resources and programs for new parents on pregnancy and parenting.

Useful Contacts and Links

Web site: <http://www.ontarioearlyyears.ca/oeyc/oeyc.htm>

Phone: 1 866 821-7770 (toll-free) – TTY 1 800 387-5559

General Settlement Resources

Settlement.org – Etablissement.org

Settlement.Org provides newcomers with information and resources to settle in Ontario. Citizenship and Immigration Canada supports this Web site to help immigrants and refugees start a new life in Ontario. This Web site has a wide range of information and links to relevant Web sites including education, housing, health, community and other services.

Useful Contacts and Links

Web site: www.settlement.org

For information about the *French-language Services Act*, please contact:

Office of Francophone Affairs
4th Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1C2
Tel.: 416 325-4949
1 800 268-7507 (toll free)
TTY: 416 325-0017
Fax: 416 325-4980
E-mail: ofa@ofa.gov.on.ca
Web site: www.ofa.gov.on.ca

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