



How to Become a Doctor in Ontario

Information for
International Medical Graduates



Opportunities and Challenges for International Medical Graduates

The information in this brochure was current as of September 2005. For the most up-to-date information, please go to www.ingo.ca.



The Government of Ontario recognizes the valuable contribution that qualified International Medical Graduates (IMGs) make to our health care system.

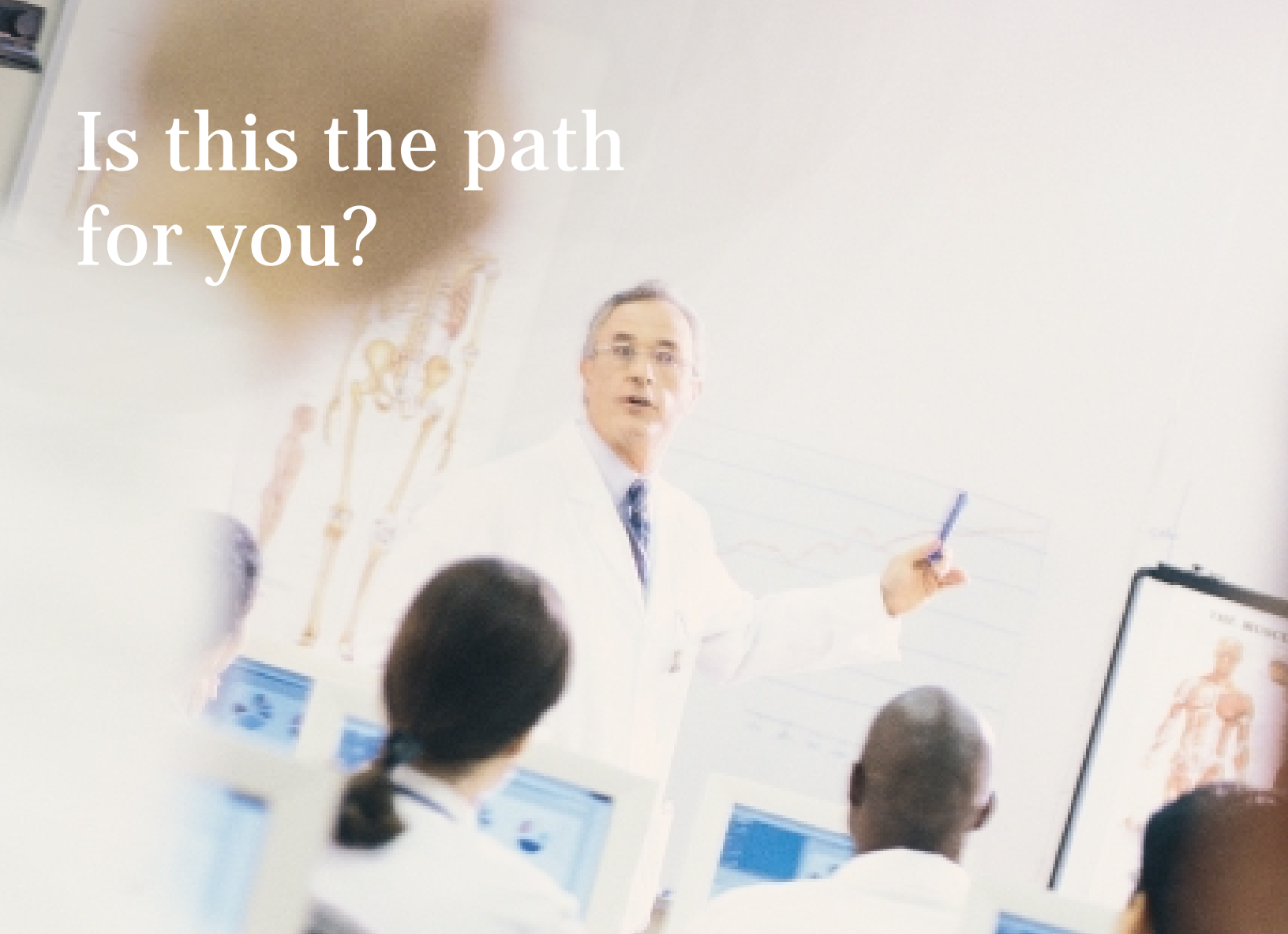
There are up to 200 training and assessment opportunities available each year for IMGs seeking to practice medicine in Ontario. Specialties may vary from year to year.

To be selected for one of the 200 training and assessment positions, IMGs must go through a tough selection process. Only the most qualified candidates will be selected based on:

- Performance on written and clinical exams
- Past medical experience
- Past performance in medical school
- Demonstrated skills and strengths.

It is important to understand that because of the large number of IMGs who apply each year, and the very competitive selection process, not all candidates will be selected for a position.

Is this the path for you?

A photograph of a male doctor in a white lab coat and glasses, pointing with a blue pen at a whiteboard. He is standing in a classroom or lecture hall, with several students in white coats seated at computers in the foreground. The whiteboard shows a line graph. To the right, there is a poster of a human anatomy diagram. The background is slightly blurred, showing a skeleton model and other classroom elements.

As a physician considering immigrating to (or recently arrived in) Ontario you must learn how to obtain a license to practice medicine in this province. This is called “registration.” You will need to look at your circumstances honestly and take the following factors into consideration:

- There is no guarantee that you will receive registration to practice in Ontario.
- The process for obtaining a training or assessment position and receiving registration to practice is complex, and will take time.
- You will have to be very committed, personally and financially.
- You will have to sign a Return-of-Service Agreement. This means that you will have to promise to practice in an underserved community in Ontario, where there is a shortage of doctors.

Here is a website that can help you to understand how the selection and registration process works. It will also help you to realistically evaluate your options: www.imginfo.ca

To find out about costs involved with this process, contact IMG-Ontario. You will find the website, address and phone number on page 11 of this document.

Paths to Registration for International Medical Graduates

1. Getting Ready

- a) Immigration and Settlement
- b) Preparing Yourself

2. IMG-Ontario Application

- a) IMG-Ontario
- b) Basic Eligibility Requirements
- c) Picking your Application Stream
- d) Selection Process

3. Postgraduate Training /Assessment

- a) Four Entry Levels

4. Registration for Practice in Ontario

- a) Medical Council of Canada Exams (or their equivalent)
- b) Certification Exams
- c) Registration with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO)

5. Finding your Practice Community

- a) Completing your Return-of-Service*
- b) Incentive Programs for Physicians

* Check IMG-Ontario's website for current information regarding the Return-of-Service policy.



What can I expect at each stage?

1. Getting Ready

a) Immigration and Settlement

Settling in Ontario

As an IMG, you may be learning about the medical registration system while looking for a place to live, finding employment and checking out schools for your children. Ontario has many immigrant support services to assist you, including settlement agencies, language instruction centres and immigrant-serving employment agencies. The following websites have information on key issues such as immigration, settlement, housing, employment, health, education, language and legal issues:

www.settlement.org

This site is designed for newcomers. Topics include employment, immigration and citizenship, language, literacy, consumer information, education, housing, health, legal services and community resources.

www.gov.on.ca

The official website of the Government of Ontario covers all aspects of life and governance in Ontario such as family issues, housing, community, education, working and worker rights, business, taxes, retirement, health care and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP). It also tells you how to contact your member of parliament and much more.

www.cic.gc.ca

This is the official website of the federal government's department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada. This site provides information on immigrating, studying, working, visiting, sponsoring family members, refugee claims, citizenship and life in Canada. It also provides access to many helpful publications for newcomers.

b) Preparing Yourself

It is important to be aware of all that is involved in the complex process to become registered for practice in Ontario and to understand, in advance, the potential commitments in money, time and personal/family stress. To realistically assess your chances of obtaining registration, it may be helpful to consider how the following things will affect your own personal circumstances:

Language

You need to be fluent in English or French. For information on English or French as a Second Language (ESL or FSL), visit www.settlement.org

You need to be able to express yourself well in technical, informal and conversational medical language.

Finances

Many IMGs must work to support their families while working toward their registration to practice. For information on finding employment and on alternative careers in the field of health care, visit www.imginfo.ca

There are many costs involved in becoming registered for practice, including fees for exams and applications, translation of documents, obtaining transcripts, notarizing degrees and transcripts, preparing credentials, language proficiency tests, travel expenses to write exams, and study materials.

Studying

You will need to develop a realistic timetable for studying that takes into account your work and family commitments.

There are many excellent study resources you can access to help you prepare for the exams. These include medical texts, sample exams, websites, lectures, study groups and more.

Supporting Documentation

Documents you will likely need include your curriculum vitae (CV), notarized copies of degrees and transcripts, certified/notarized translations of non-English/French documents, Dean's Letter, personal statements, proof of immigration status, proof of language proficiency, and references. See IMG-Ontario's website for information.

Specialties

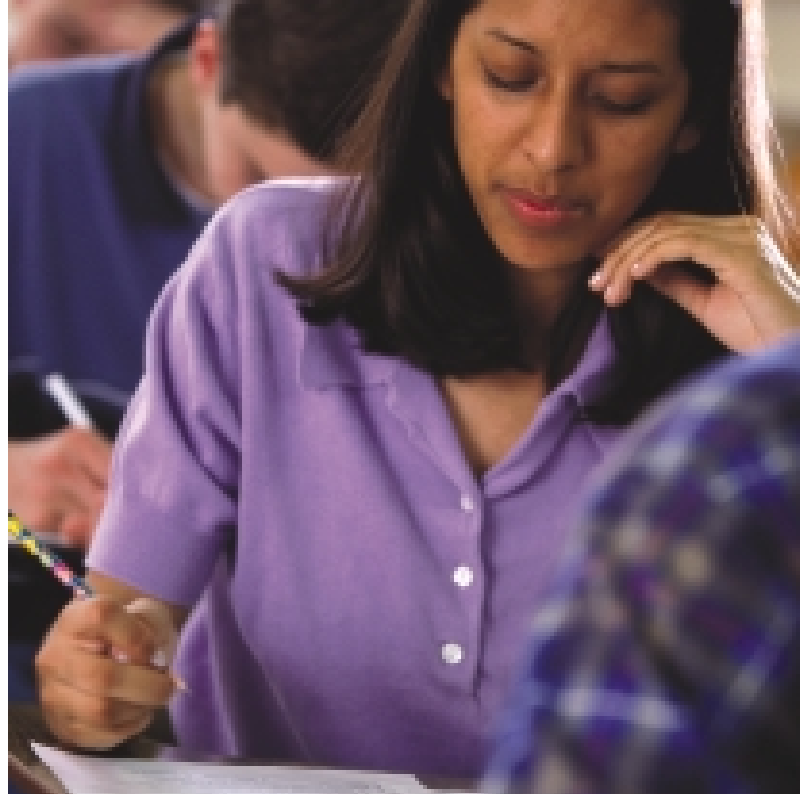
Annually, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care identifies which specialties are open to IMGs. Not all specialties are available to IMGs. See IMG-Ontario's website for a list of disciplines offered.

Preparing for the Selection Process

The process of preparing yourself to meet the eligibility requirements and take the various written and clinical exams that are necessary to obtain your registration will vary depending on your circumstances. The following are some of the factors that will likely affect your planning:

- Recent medical school graduates may need less preparation time overall, since they will have recently studied the general medical knowledge covered by the exams.
- Specialists may need to commit considerable time refreshing their knowledge of general medicine.
- IMGs with limited funds may need to work to support themselves and save money to cover exam costs. They may not be able to dedicate themselves to studying full time, and therefore may take longer to prepare.
- IMGs who are not fluent in English or French need to become proficient in one of the languages. Assessments are currently only available in English, but the French assessment process was being developed at time of printing.
- Some IMGs may be able to save time by taking some of the required exams prior to coming to Canada.

See www.imginfo.ca for more information.



2. IMG-Ontario Application

a) IMG-Ontario

IMG-Ontario is the main point of entry for IMGs seeking registration to practice in Ontario. IMG-Ontario works in cooperation with the Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine (COFM), the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC). Funding is provided by the Government of Ontario.

IMG-Ontario does much more than select candidates for the 200 training and assessment positions that are available for IMGs each year. It also provides information and support services to help IMGs understand Ontario's regulatory and postgraduate systems, and can make referrals to other organizations that offer resources for IMGs.

Application forms and information are available on the IMG-Ontario website.

b) Basic Eligibility Requirements

1. Medical Credentials

Applicants will need to provide a notarized/certified copy of an undergraduate medical degree/diploma and transcripts from a university listed in the World Health Organization's Medical School Directory.

2. Medical Exams

Applicants must have passed the Medical Council of Canada Evaluating Examination (MCCEE) and Qualifying Examination Part 1 (MCCQE1). Refer to www.mcc.ca for forms, dates and deadlines.



3. Legal and Resident of Ontario Status

Applicants to all Entry Levels must be Canadian citizens, permanent residents or intend to immigrate to Canada. Check the IMG-Ontario website to find out how this policy affects you.

4. Language Proficiency

Program testing, assessments and training are available primarily in English, although at time of printing the French assessment process was being developed.

Applicants must demonstrate fluency in English or French through one of the following:

- (a) An acceptable score on a recognized test of English as a foreign language. Please see the IMG-Ontario website for details.
- (b) Success in the French proficiency test administered by the Collège des Médecins du Québec.
- (c) Completion of the “Language Proficiency Form: Medical School,” which can be downloaded from the IMG-Ontario website and must be mailed directly from the Dean of the applicant’s medical school certifying that the language of instruction and patient care was conducted completely in either English or French, or

- (d) Completion of the “Language Proficiency Form: Primary School,” and “Language Proficiency Form: Secondary School,” which can be downloaded from the IMG-Ontario website and must be mailed directly from the Senior Academic Administrator of the applicant’s primary school and secondary school certifying that the applicant’s primary and secondary education was conducted completely in either English or French.

5. Prior Postgraduate Training

Not required for application to Clerkship Entry or PGY1 Entry Levels. A minimum of one year of postgraduate training in the specialty to which you are applying is required to apply to the PGY2 Entry Level. Prior completion of a postgraduate medical education program is required to apply to the Practice Ready Assessment (PRA) Entry Level.

6. Independent Professional Practice Experience

This is considered as part of an applicant’s professional portfolio. Certification and/or independent professional experience is required at the Practice Ready Assessment Level.

7. Reference Letters

Reference letters should be written in either English or French and sent directly to IMG-Ontario from the individual(s) writing the letters. Reference letters are mandatory.

8. Other

Supporting documents such as the applicant's curriculum vitae (CV), a copy of his/her medical diploma, transcripts, application fee and cover letter may be required.

See the IMG-Ontario website for details.

Note: There are no exemptions from the basic eligibility requirements.

c) Picking your Application Stream

Two Application Streams

Applicants must indicate one Stream: either Family Medicine or Specialist.

1. Family Medicine Stream

Family Medicine is the specialty that provides primary health care in Ontario.

2. Specialist Stream

Specialist Medicine provides secondary or tertiary health care (as referred by the primary care physician or another specialist).

Candidates can select one Stream only.

d) Selection Process

IMG-Ontario uses a standard selection process for all applicants. This process includes several key steps:

1. Application Screening

All applications are screened by IMG-Ontario staff to ensure that candidates meet the basic eligibility requirements. For a list of basic eligibility requirements please visit the IMG-Ontario website.

2. Examinations

Candidates who meet the basic eligibility requirements may be invited to participate in a clinical skills examination. A written exam may also be required for some Entry Levels.

3. Interview

A candidate's clinical skills may be further assessed during a personal interview.

4. File or Dossier Review

This step is a review and evaluation of the results of exams, the clinical skills assessment and interview, and other quantitative and qualitative criteria. Upon completion of this review, Program Directors will select the candidates most likely to succeed in residency or assessment positions.

3. Postgraduate Training / Assessment

a) Four Entry Levels

In addition to selecting a Program Stream, all applicants to IMG-Ontario must choose the Entry Level/Levels they wish to apply to within the Stream they have chosen.

Specialists applying to the Practice Ready Assessment, Postgraduate Year 2 and Postgraduate Year 1 Levels must indicate one choice of discipline.

1. Practice Ready Assessment (PRA) Level

(Family Medicine and Specialist Stream)

The Practice Ready Assessment (PRA) Level involves a six month assessment in a supervised clinical setting. There are three possible outcomes. A candidate may be deemed:

- (i) Practice ready – proceed with registration,
- (ii) Lacking in a particular area – further training as a postgraduate medical resident is prescribed in order to help the candidate top up their medical knowledge in the identified area, or
- (iii) Significantly lacking – dismissed from program.

2. Postgraduate Year 2 (PGY2) Level

(Specialist Stream Only)

Postgraduate Year 2 (PGY2) Level permits entrance into the second year of postgraduate training in a specialty residency program. The first 8-12 weeks of the residency program is an Assessment Verification Period (AVP). During this period, candidates are evaluated to ensure that they can perform at the PGY2 level in their specialty.

Note: There is no PGY2 Entry Level in the Family Medicine Stream. Family Medicine candidates applying to enter postgraduate training must apply at the Postgraduate Year 1 (PGY1) Level.

3. Postgraduate Year 1 (PGY1) Level

(Family Medicine and Specialist Stream)

Postgraduate Year 1 (PGY1) Level permits entrance into the first year of a residency training program. The first 8-12 weeks of the residency training is an Assessment Verification Period (see above).

Note: Family Medicine candidates must complete a four month Pre-Residency Program before beginning their residency training program.

4. Clerkship Level

(Specialist Stream Only)

The Clerkship Level is similar to the final year of undergraduate medical school. Following successful completion of clerkship training, candidates are eligible to apply for a PGY1 position, at which point they must indicate one choice of discipline.

4. Registration for Practice in Ontario

a) Medical Council of Canada Exams (or their equivalent)

In Ontario, physicians applying for registration to practice must have successfully completed Part 1 and Part 2 of the Medical Council of Canada Qualifying Examination (also called MCCQE1 and MCCQE2) or an exam that the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) considers equivalent.

Before IMGs can take the MCCQE Part 1, they must first pass the Medical Council of Canada Evaluating Exam (MCCEE). The MCCEE is held in various locations throughout Canada and the world, and is open to all IMGs holding an acceptable medical degree.

Passing the MCCEE gives physicians access to the MCCQE Part 1. Before they can take Part 2, physicians must first pass Part 1 and complete at least 12 months of postgraduate training. This training may be taken anywhere in the world.

For further information and to obtain an application for the MCCEE, please visit the Medical Council of Canada website: www.mcc.ca

For information about what exams the CPSO may consider to be equivalent to the MCCQE Parts 1 and 2, please visit the CPSO's website: www.cpso.on.ca

b) Certification Exams

In Canada, all physicians are specialized in Family Medicine or another Specialty. Ontario requires physicians to have a specialty designation from either the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) or the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) in order to obtain registration to practice.

Family Physicians

For information about receiving certification as a family physician from the CFPC, please visit www.cfpc.ca

Specialists

For information about receiving certification as a specialist from the RCPSC, visit www.rcpsc.medical.org

c) Registration with The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO)

Following postgraduate residency training/assessment and pending CFPC/RCPSC certification, graduates apply to The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) to be issued a certificate of registration to practice in the province. For an IMG, the initial certificate may be a restricted certificate of registration, which means that there would be conditions on the registration. Upon completion of the required conditions, the physician may be issued a certificate of registration for Independent Practice.



5. Finding your Practice Community

a) Completing your Return-of-Service

In exchange for funding provided by the Government of Ontario to support IMG assessment and training positions, participants in IMG-Ontario programs sign a Return-of-Service agreement. This contract commits an IMG to several years of service in a community within Ontario that is designated as underserved because it has a shortage of doctors. Check IMG-Ontario's website for current information regarding the Return-of-Service policy.

b) Incentive Programs for Physicians

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has a number of incentive programs for physicians interested in practicing in underserved communities in Ontario. To find out more, visit www.health.gov.on.ca



Other Ontario Programs

Repatriation Program Eligibility

If you are a Canadian citizen or permanent resident who has completed postgraduate residency training in a program recognized by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (RCPSC), but you require additional postgraduate training to obtain certification in Canada, you may be eligible for the Repatriation Program. You will need a letter of assessment from the RCPSC confirming the length and type of training required and you will have to agree to practice in an underserved area for several years once you finish your training. See www.health.gov.on.ca for more information.

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO)

The CPSO has approved a number of policies and programs that are designed to grant registration to qualified physicians, whether they are currently in Ontario or outside of the province. Information about these programs and other requirements for registration in Ontario can be found on the College's website at www.cpso.on.ca

Resources

- Medical Council of Canada (MCC)
(613) 521-6012 www.mcc.ca
- Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) 1-800-668-3740 www.rcpsc.medical.org
- College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC)
1-800-387-6197 www.cfpc.ca
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO)
1-800-268-7096 or (416) 967-2603 www.cpso.on.ca
- Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC)
1-800-268-1154 www.health.gov.on.ca
- Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU)
1-800-387-5514 or (416) 325-2929 www.edu.gov.on.ca
- Health Canada (HC)
1-866-225-0709 www.hc-sc.gc.ca
- Collège des Médecins du Québec
(French proficiency test) www.cmq.org

IMG Support Groups in Ontario

The Association of International Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (AIPSO) is a membership-based association representing the interests of IMGs. Services offered by the regional AIPSO affiliate groups may include information on registration, career counseling, support in preparing for exams and information on alternative careers.

AIPSO Affiliates

Guelph

Guelph and District Multicultural Centre
Tel: (519) 836-2222
Email: mailbox@gdmc.org
Website: www.gdmc.org

Hamilton

Hamilton International Healthcare Professionals
Tel: (905) 521-9917 ext. 256
Email: hihp@siso-ham.org
Website: www.siso-ham.org

Kitchener-Waterloo

Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre
Tel: (519) 745-2531
Email: kwmc@kwmc.on.ca
Website: www.kwmc.on.ca

London

London Cross Cultural Learner Centre
Tel: (519) 432-1133
Email: cclc@lcclc.org
Website: www.lcclc.org

Ottawa

Catholic Immigration Centre
Tel: (613) 232-9634
Email: cic@cic.ca
Website: www.cic.ca

Toronto

AIPSO
Tel: (416) 979-8611, ext. 4300 or ext. 4301
Email: info@aipso.ca
Website: www.aipso.ca

Niagara Region

Welland/Niagara-St. Catharines
Multicultural Centre
Tel: (905) 732-5337 Tel: (905) 685-1353
Email: whc@on.aibn.com
Website: www.iaw.on.ca/whc

Windsor

Windsor-Essex IMG
Tel: (519) 745-2531
Email: windsor@aipso.ca

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