

Consultations on the Settlement and Language Training Services Needs of Newcomers



in Support of the Canada-Ontario
Immigration Agreement

Executive Summary

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The first-ever Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement was signed in November 2005. Over the next five years, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) plans to invest \$920 million in new funding for settlement and language training programs and services in Ontario (subject to parliamentary appropriations). To guide this investment, the federal and provincial government (Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration – MCI) will jointly develop settlement and language training strategies. The overall goal of these strategies is to support the successful social and economic integration of immigrants in Ontario.

This consultation process was undertaken during the period of June to September 2006 to provide an update on the state of newcomer needs and expectations, related service gaps and ways to improve services and delivery. These consultations will inform the development of the joint Canada-Ontario strategies. InterQuest Consulting of Ottawa was selected to design and deliver the consultations through a competitive bid process.

The scope, focus and approach to the consultations were guided by a planning committee with representation from CIC, MCI and the City of Toronto.

The consultation process was funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

This report was compiled from the findings of the consultation and prepared by InterQuest Consulting. The report is available in PDF format, and can be downloaded in whole or in part from CIC and MCI websites as well as at www.settlement.org.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement was signed in November 2005. Under this agreement, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) will invest \$920 million in new funding over the next five years for settlement and language training programs and services in Ontario. To guide this investment, the Governments of Canada and Ontario plan to develop joint settlement and language training strategies to help support the successful social and economic integration of immigrants in Ontario.

Thus, in the spring of 2006, the governments initiated a two-phase consultation process to seek input from a broad range of stakeholders. The purpose of the consultation was to obtain an update on the state of newcomer needs, related service gaps and ways to improve services and delivery. These consultations will inform the development of the joint Canada-Ontario strategies for settlement and language training services. InterQuest Consulting of Ottawa was selected to design and deliver the consultations through a competitive bid process. The two-phase consultation process took place between June and September 2006.

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

Phase 1

In the first phase, governments hosted two series of sessions: one with newcomers to Canada¹, and another with service provider organizations (settlement agencies, language service providers and others who provide services to newcomers or have an interest in the successful settlement of newcomers). An extensive recruitment process was undertaken to ensure a broad representation of newcomers and service providers at the sessions.

The purpose of the newcomer focus group sessions was to obtain information about newcomers' expectations and experiences during the immigration and integration process in order to identify service gaps and optimal ways of delivering and measuring the effectiveness of language and settlement services.

The second set of sessions in Phase 1 (attended by service provider organizations) built on the results of the newcomer focus groups. The purpose of the sessions was to obtain feedback on the results of the newcomer focus groups, to obtain information on optimal ways of addressing the newcomer needs, and to identify potential new delivery models to address the service needs and gaps.

Phase 2

The second phase of consultations was held to obtain feedback on findings from the first phase, to broaden potential strategies and solutions, and to outline the elements of a desired service delivery system. Each session in Phase 2 was attended by newcomers and service organizations (settlement and language service providers) who participated in Phase 1. In addition, a range of employment related organizations that have an interest in the successful settlement of new immigrants attended.



¹ Session participants were newcomers to Canada who have been here for more than 9 months and less than 4 years.

RESULTS FROM PHASE 1: NEWCOMER FOCUS GROUPS

Newcomers' Main Areas of Need

During the newcomer focus groups, participants were asked to respond to a series of questions addressing their needs (both those that have been satisfied and those that have not), settlement successes, and sources of information. Participants were asked to comment on the services they expected to access during the following time phases: before coming to Canada; within the first 6 months of arrival; after their first 6 months in Canada to the time of the consultation; and in the next two to three years.

The main needs of newcomers fell into nine primary areas: the need for better information and guidance; employment; language and education; initial orientation; financial stability; cultural integration; social and emotional support; health; and housing. The top three needs of newcomers are employment, language and better information and guidance (see table below). These needs are consistent across target groups with two exceptions: a) seniors (ages 50+) also indicated that health is a priority need for them; and b) youth (ages 13-19) chose cultural integration, language and education as their top priorities.

These areas of need affect newcomers in all time phases and most are experienced by all target groups. There are strong relationships and interactions between many of these areas of need. Each need area is described in more detail below.

Better information and guidance - Balanced and accurate information about the benefits and challenges of immigrating should be provided

to immigrants prior to arrival in Canada so that they can make an *informed* decision about whether or not to immigrate. It is also needed upon arrival and beyond to inform the settlement process over time. All information should be specific, tailored and practical, and it should come from official sources. Printed materials are not enough and must be accompanied by personal guidance such as a case worker, mentor and/or host family.

Employment - This was the biggest priority for nearly all newcomers. Economic immigrants, particularly, are looking for a *good* job that is commensurate with their education, skills and experience. The need for employment is closely related to three other perceived barriers: obtaining equivalencies for education or professional certification acquired in other countries, obtaining recognition for previous work experience outside of Canada, and obtaining references for work, housing, and other purposes.

Credential recognition is a primary concern for nearly all economic immigrants. If possible, most newcomers recommended starting the process of accreditation prior to leaving their home countries. Unemployment, underemployment and difficulties obtaining professional work are causing depression, boredom, isolation and cynicism. Bridging programs such as mentorship and co-op programs, with minimal salaries or the equivalent of social assistance, were recommended as a way to support a new-

Table 1: Top Three Needs by Target Group

	Women	Seniors	Youth	Men	All
Better Information and Guidance	3	3		3	3
Employment	1	1		1	1
Language	2	3	2	2	2
Initial Orientation					
Financial Stability					
Housing					
Cultural Integration			1		
Social and Emotional Support					
Health		2			
Education			3		
Childcare					

“I want to work in my chosen field. How can I give my family and Canada my best if I am home doing nothing? I want to contribute...”

comer’s ability to find a good job, provide Canadian experience, enhance knowledge of Canadian professions and create opportunities to demonstrate competency in a particular profession. Participants recognized the value and importance of volunteering but opportunities are not always a good fit as they are often unrelated to particular professions, take valuable time away from job searches and are difficult to afford (especially if other needs are present such as child care).

Language - Obtaining functional language skills is a priority for all immigrants. On the whole, participants were happy with their experiences in both Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) and English as Second Language (ESL) schools. Newcomers recommended the following improvements to language services: provide better assessment of language skill and organization of classes so that curriculum can be better targeted to specific skill levels and employment needs, provide additional training in employment-related language and teach additional curriculum around Canadian idioms, customs and other idiosyncrasies of Canadian culture and language. Access to language training was an issue for a number of newcomers. Francophone newcomers felt that they were at a disadvantage as they found it difficult to access English language classes. Many immigrants also recommended that additional language preparation should be undertaken before arrival in Canada.

Initial orientation - There are significant gaps in newcomers’ understanding of the practicalities of getting settled (e.g., finding shelter, obtaining OHIP and SIN cards). Participants strongly encouraged governments to provide a

personal guide to provide practical help and guidance, especially in the initial settlement period. In addition, information should be tailored to meet the orientation and information needs of individual newcomers’ situations (e.g., employment information, housing information, etc.) over time. Newcomers also voiced a need for more candid, honest orientation during the application period before coming to Canada.

- **Francophone Needs:** Newcomers identified needs for more accessibility and higher quality French services suggesting that bilingual services are most often inadequate and in some cases, unavailable.

Financial stability – Many newcomers expressed concerns about their current financial situation, which all too often has become quite poor and is deteriorating. On the whole, newcomers are grateful for the financial assistance they receive from government but would rather be working; all expressed desire to contribute to Canada’s success. All newcomers face difficulties in the banking system, including obtaining bank accounts, credit cards and loans.

Cultural integration - Most newcomers have found Canadians to be very friendly, kind and helpful. They enjoy Canada for its multiculturalism, religious and cultural freedom, political stability, peace and safety. Many immigrants have also experienced racism and discrimination both from Canadians and other immigrant cultures. Other newcomers have simply faced difficulties interacting with Canadians who are impatient and unfriendly. They suggested that the government should undertake an awareness campaign to educate Canadians about immigrants; immigration and the ways in which Canadians can help make the newcomer’s transition to Canada smoother. Community and multicultural centres were seen by many to be important gathering places that help foster integration, new friends, sport, recreation and artistic experiences. Immigrants also pointed to a need to create and support personal networks and local support groups.

■ **Social and emotional support** - A range of mental health services are required to help immigrants. In some cases, informal, one-on-one counselling is enough to help all immigrants deal with issues such as culture shock and parenting issues. In other cases, professional psychological or psychiatric support is necessary (e.g., particularly for refugees and abused immigrants). Loneliness and depression resulting from social isolation (and the immigration experience more generally) were also mentioned by many participants. They strongly recommended the creation of additional or new opportunities for social interaction among newcomers, and with Canadians, in order to foster networking, sharing of immigration experiences, exchange of advice, or simply for relaxation and fun. For youth and working parents, additional or new organized, structured and free (or very low cost) after school programs are needed.

■ **Health care** - On the whole, newcomers are highly complimentary about Canada's health care system. But many newcomers were surprised to discover that a) there is a 3-month waiting period to receive OHIP, b) all services are not covered and, c) taxes are high to support the health care system. Newcomers are also concerned about the quality of the health care system, noting that they have experienced long waiting times for health care and have had difficulties finding family doctors especially doctors that speak their languages.

■ **Housing** - The immediate need for appropriate housing is a great challenge upon arrival for nearly all newcomers. Challenges include lack of understanding of the types of housing that are available and the relative features of each, an inability to secure rental accommodations and poor availability of adequate, affordable housing.

“Tell us the truth so that we can make an informed decision about whether or not to immigrate.”

Newcomers' Needs by Time Phase

Participants were asked to comment on the needs and challenges they faced in finding and using the services they required before departing for Canada, within the first 3-6 months of arrival in Canada, and from 6 months to the present. They were also asked to consider the types of services they may require in the future (e.g., the next 2-3 years).

In general, messages received by newcomers about Canada are overly optimistic and paint an unrealistic picture of the challenges that immigrants face upon arrival, especially with respect to finding a job in their field and the length of time it takes to settle. The gap between reality and what is being told to immigrants is huge and colours many different aspects of an immigrant's experience, understanding and acceptance of life in Canada.

Before arriving in Canada newcomers' needs were primarily related to the need to manage expectations about immigration and to kick start the settlement process. They felt that the challenges they faced upon arrival in Canada could be minimized (or in some cases, eliminated) if they had received more targeted, accurate and balanced information prior to leaving their home countries. Newcomers also identified some issues that could be addressed to allow them to start (and in some cases, complete) some tasks before leaving their home countries such as the accreditation process, the process of finding a good job and language training.

Newcomers' main needs upon arrival and in their first few months after arriving in Canada were mostly related to receiving practical help for completing immediate tasks related to survival (e.g., finding shelter, food, employment and learning language); and navigating the bureaucratic processes required for settlement (e.g., getting documentation for OHIP).

From 6 months to the time of the consultation, the predominant need expressed by immigrants was the need for more targeted information and

services tailored to the personal situation, needs and goals of individual newcomers and their families. This should take the form both of information and personal guidance (e.g., through a coach, mentor or similar individual).

When asked to consider the needs they are likely to have in the next 2-3 years, nearly all newcomers said, “I need a good job.” When pressed further, many indicated that guidance around long-term decisions and activities would be useful including long-term financial and education advice, advice about employment trends, additional language skills, housing advice, and the creation and maintenance of social networks.

Newcomers’ Needs by Target Group

In Phase 1, four target groups were held with women. For the most part, the women felt empowered, free and equal to other Canadians, particularly Canadian men. They also felt supported by the Canadian system in such a way that they were able to address issues of spousal abuse and family safety. At the same time, however, they were struggling with cultural issues at home, where roles of men and women are very specific and may be upset by the need for women to work and/or new ideas about gender roles.

Child care issues were a significant concern for almost all newcomer families as a barrier to finding work and establishing financial stability. This issue was of particular concern to women, who often had primary responsibility for children. They recommended the creation of more affordable child care, with flexible hours to accommodate shift work and care before and after school hours for school-age children.

Many women have experienced sadness and depression due to loneliness and isolation, loss of confidence (due to limited language skills, loss of status in their community and unemployment), and (for refugees) an inability to deal with the past. They felt that it would be worthwhile to have counselling

*“As a woman, I am happy here.
I can look people in the eye and
speak in a loud voice.”*

and other mental health related services available to women and other immigrants to address these issues. Social opportunities were also considered to be extremely important in this regard.

Four focus groups were held involving youth. They experienced many of the same settlement and language challenges highlighted previously, although education was a higher priority for them than employment. A Canadian education was seen as an advantage of immigrating, mostly at the university level (e.g., Canadian degrees are recognized worldwide). Overall, the youth experienced a lack of information about Canada in general and the education system in particular, and a limited knowledge/understanding on how to get it. Isolation is a significant issue for immigrant teenagers. The youth urged the government to make available more opportunities to play sports. Finally, some participants highlighted the need for additional youth-oriented assistance, including more counselling that is sensitive to newcomer conditions (especially, but not only, for refugees).

Three seniors groups were convened involving men and women over the age of 50 at the time of immigration. Health care is a key issue for seniors. Many of the barriers and challenges experienced by seniors are exacerbated by what they identified as increased difficulties in learning English. Most of the seniors were actively looking for work in their chosen field. However, in addition to the challenges faced by younger immigrants, they faced the added barrier of their age and additional difficulties of obtaining proof of education. Their financial stability was a significant worry for most seniors. As a result, they would like to receive Old Age Security sooner (currently, there is a 10-year waiting period). None recommended immigrating as a senior.

RESULTS FROM PHASE 1: ORGANIZATION SESSIONS

Overall, organization participants confirmed and validated the results of the newcomer sessions. They found that the presentation of the results provided an accurate and complete picture of the types of challenges that newcomers face related to settling into Canada and Ontario and were generally complimentary of the focus group process and the results it produced. They affirmed that newcomers have significant needs that are not being satisfactorily met including some specialized needs that must be addressed. They also agreed that there are service gaps that must be tackled to meet these needs and in general the report on newcomer results had captured these ideas quite fully and honestly.

However, some organizations expressed concern that the challenges and needs of some groups might be understated including those of marginalized and isolated newcomers such as abused women and seniors and troubled youth. They also noted that issues related to family violence, discrimination and racism tended to be understated as were rural issues. Finally, a few organizations were concerned about the overall validity of the results of the newcomer focus groups and questioned the consultation timeline and whether the number of newcomers consulted was high enough to be representative of newcomer needs in Ontario.

Suggested Solutions to Address Main Areas of Newcomer Needs

At each half-day session, organizations were given an overview of the main findings of the newcomer focus group sessions. Based on these results and their own experiences, organizations were asked to identify priority newcomer needs and to suggest ways to address them.

■ **Better information and guidance** - Organizations agreed that newcomers are lacking personal guidance and have difficulty accessing needed information quickly and at the right time. Overall, organizations recommended creating

a ‘one-stop shop’ or central clearinghouse with a central point of contact and links to related information and appropriate navigation aids. Many organizations also recommended coordinating initial entry to the settlement process on arrival in Canada so that newcomers access one point of entry (e.g., a settlement or other agency) that refers them to other, appropriate services based on their personal situation. It would also be helpful to market settlement services more effectively by creating an instantly recognizable symbol or brand that identifies settlement services easily. Special consideration should be given to providing services in French to ensure adequate access for Francophone newcomers.

The provision of information (print and web-based) is not enough on its own and must be coupled with more personalized, one-on-one service available to newcomers over the full settlement pathway (i.e., before leaving their home country, at arrival and beyond). Prior to immigration, embassies have a key role to play in providing up-to-date, accurate and useful information to newcomers.

Finally, for a coordinated approach to be successful and effective, liaisons and partnerships between agencies must be created and maintained, services must remain flexible enough to meet the changing needs of newcomers over time, and political and funding barriers to such a coordinated approach must be addressed.

■ **Employment** - Service providers agreed that employment is the top priority for the majority of new arrivals and thus, is a key priority for moving forward. Employer education is an important part of the solution. Education and awareness programs are needed to address employer’s unwillingness to recognize professional status and foreign experience as well as employer’s ignorance and biases about newcomers’ assets and potential contribution to the work place and the Canadian economy. Targeted education

programs are also needed to raise awareness around ethnic and racial biases and to introduce sensitivities to cultural diversity into places of work.

Clear information about both regulated and unregulated professions needs to be provided to newcomers in their home countries. This information will help equip them to appropriately plan for and initiate the process of accreditation and recognition of qualifications. The government needs to provide incentive programs to encourage employers to hire new immigrants and to participate in bridging programs and on-site education and development. Incentives such as grants, subsidies or tax relief could be offered in conjunction with practical help to screen and train newcomer employees. On-the-job development programs would also be an asset including the ongoing provision of workplace language classes. Governments need to set a good example for other businesses by changing their own policies and practices to hire more immigrants.

Language - Organizations addressed six primary needs under the language theme: the need to provide information in a variety of languages and formats, providing opportunities for newcomers to achieve a higher degree of language proficiency before arriving in Canada, improving the manner in which language skills are assessed, improving access to language programs (e.g., LINC and ESL), ensuring that language programs are efficient and relevant to the learner and the need to make a stronger link between language training and employment.

They recommended solutions such as providing online language training and distance learning for potential newcomers and newcomers who cannot access central locations, developing a national approach to language assessments, creating common assessment tools, building more flexibility into language program access, changing the service provision framework to one that is oriented to the learner and

targeting language training to specific target groups, professions or language objectives. Organizations also suggested offering a single point of contact for all francophone newcomers to direct and refer them to available French services as well as expanding some of the services that are currently being provided by other organizations such as French school boards. Finally, they emphasized the need to support language training in the work place and to support employers in the delivery of language training.

Initial Orientation - To address the newcomers' need for additional information about settlement services upon arrival in Canada, organizations recommended providing information in different formats in a variety of languages. This information should be presented in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner and must be updated regularly. Information specific to the newcomer (e.g., based on profession, settlement region and/or other factors) should be provided as well as general information about settlement. Organizations also supported the need for direct, personal guidance upon arrival. They noted that a one-stop shop could be used to assess and refer newcomers to appropriate services.

Financial Stability - To help newcomers achieve financial stability many organizations recommended providing financial support to newcomers (e.g., a stipend) while they are immersed in the settlement process so that they can improve their language skills and focus on finding employment without worrying about the need to support their families. Many also recommended subsidizing immigrants while they are involved in bridging programs (e.g., co-op or internship programs) for the same reason. It was also suggested that financial institutions should revise their policies and newcomers would benefit from budgeting and financial management classes. Finally, many organizations agreed with senior newcomers that the waiting period for Old Age Security should be shortened.

■ **Cultural Integration** - Organizations suggested creating more mentorship or hosting programs as well as networking and orientation sessions to help increase newcomers' awareness of and access to Canadian cultural knowledge. They pointed out that government policies could be revised to better support the integration of newcomers. As well, governments could provide additional support to service providers to ensure that they are adequately staffed and resourced to offer cultural integration services.

Educating Canadians is an important element of a successful immigration program as well. Organizations recommended increasing diversity training (in the work place, schools and the community), involving the media (both mainstream and ethnic), organizing community multicultural events and instituting community mentoring programs as ways of improving cultural awareness among Canadians and new immigrants. Newcomers would also benefit from additional support and training about the roles and responsibilities of parents, men, women and children in Canada. Finally, organizations encouraged governments to deal with racism issues more openly and effectively.

■ **Social and Emotional Support** - Settlement agencies called for more mental health services (both general counselling and professional psychological services) to be provided for newcomers. Education, awareness and training efforts aimed at increasing cultural sensitivity and understanding in mainstream systems and services would help as well. Organizations also recommended providing funding for family and couples counselling services with multilingual, multicultural counsellors. Support for victims of domestic violence could include provision of shelters and specialized counselling. The special needs of women, seniors and youth should be addressed separately. With respect to the newcomer's need for social networks, organizations encouraged the creation of a host program to link newcomer families with Canadians as well

as further development of social programs and support groups.

■ **Health** - To improve health services for immigrants, organizations suggested providing interpretation services at medical offices, basic medical information in multiple languages and allowing foreign trained medical professionals to practice in Canada (to address the doctor shortage and issues of access as well as the need for culturally sensitive health services). They also acknowledged the difficulties that the 3-month waiting period for OHIP causes immigrants and recommended that government waive the waiting period, provide limited coverage and/or provide better information about coverage to newcomers as early as possible.

■ **Housing** - Organizations echoed newcomers' concerns about the need for affordable housing and suggested that governments provide temporary housing to immigrants. They also suggested providing education and incentives to landlords and banks as a means of addressing some of the barriers faced by immigrants in securing housing. Immigrants themselves could also benefit from additional education about their rights and recourse related to housing issues.

Broad Governance, Policy and Structure Issues

In addition to detailed suggestions for each specific area of need, organizations highlighted several overarching issues dealing with the governance, policy and funding structure as it supports services for newcomers. Many indicated that these issues are fundamental and should be addressed before any significant improvements can be achieved in service delivery. Their comments and recommendations are clustered under eight major headings:

■ **Address the changed needs of current immigrants and adjust the settlement policy** - Canada's settlement infrastructure is based on

an outdated immigration model (i.e. the infrastructure is designed to relate more to immigration patterns of a couple of decades ago, when the focus was much less on skilled immigrants) and is not responsive to today's newcomer profile. Thus, settlement policy and settlement services need to be adjusted to better meet the needs of newcomers.

■ **Improve the service delivery model** - Future services must be needs-based, client-oriented and flexible. Service providers must be able to adapt their programs and services quickly and easily for different subgroups. Coordination among multiple delivery models on a regional basis is required to improve service. Organizations suggested creating a regionally-based, one-stop shop as a central point of intake providing assessment, delegation and referral services to immigrants as well as to identify region wide settlement and language priorities, coordinate the efforts of the service infrastructure and advise on harmonizing service offerings, where appropriate.

■ **Reform the funding model** - The current funding model is so focused on numbers that it results in a lack of coordination among service providers and unwillingness to refer immigrants to the most appropriate services available. The process that organizations follow to obtain government funding exacerbates these issues. A more layered, coordinated approach, with allowance to provide for different services in different areas, is needed to allow rural, semi-urban and urban areas to provide services well. Also, a range of accountability frameworks, or funding models, are needed for different size communities. Thus, service providers suggested changing the funding formula to have one delivery model where there is a central point of intake, with participation from all relevant stakeholders (including non-funded organizations) and government agencies.

■ **Build a more coordinated approach** - A more harmonized and coordinated approach is needed among and within governments, and across pro-

grams. Along with implementation of initiatives such as a one-stop shop, solutions aimed specifically at improving cooperation, collaboration and coordination among governments and programs need to be explored (e.g., information directories to share best practices, partnering and networking opportunities).

■ **Improve organizations' ability to deliver services** - Organizations recognized and supported the need for more personalized service for newcomers but noted that additional staff with appropriate training is required to meet these needs effectively. In general, settlement and language staff requested more ongoing training and professional development.

■ **Strengthen and deliver services in French** - Organizations suggested that a separate stream of services (for all time phases) needs to be developed and maintained in French as well as in English (with a central point of intake and networked organizations).

■ **Integrate mainstream and newcomer policies where appropriate** - Many of the challenges faced by immigrants are also experienced by Canadians. Thus, where appropriate, newcomer needs could be better integrated into broad national and provincial policies (e.g., affordable housing policies should address both Canadians and newcomers' needs) and to improve access to services, information about settlement and language services should be available at mainstream locales (e.g., places of worship, community centres, grocery stores). Finally, organizations urged government to consider ways to create more flexibility in social support policies and eligibility.

■ **Provide settlement services longer** - Newcomer needs are not being addressed adequately over time so services need to be provided for a longer period of time. Some organizations suggested that the eligibility period should be extended for an additional 2 years beyond citizenship.

Overall, organizations noted that newcomers require flexible services that can be offered in ways that meet their personal, individual needs. Organizations encouraged the development of a service delivery model that is flexible and innovative so that on-the-ground services can be shifted to meet the changing needs of immigrants as they are recognized and assessed. They also recognized, however, that flexibility and innovativeness must be balanced with an ability to monitor, account for, and improve services over time.

Improving Awareness, Access and Coordination of Services

Organizations were asked to consider the reasons why a large number of immigrants do not seem to be accessing services and to comment on potential solutions to address the identified access issues.

Overall, they agreed that the creation of a one-stop shop to centralize, coordinate and promote information and services and to provide referral to services would significantly improve newcomers' ability to access services. They also noted the importance of marketing services in creative ways (e.g., using ethnic media), coordinating services and information, creating a brand or logo with which to identify services, and improving agencies' capacity to deliver services.

They also encouraged governments to create a seamless service delivery model where services are provided to immigrants where and when they are needed regardless of the funding source. This could be achieved by creating a one-stop shop, involving multiple stakeholders in the solution, improving government coordination and the quality of services and offering networking and learning opportunities for service providers.

RESULTS FROM PHASE 2: PRIORITIES AND THE DELIVERY SYSTEM

The second phase of the consultations was held to provide a report on findings from the first phase and to discuss, consolidate and prioritize potential strategies and solutions for meeting the needs and addressing the gaps identified by newcomers and organizations, and to outline the elements of a desired service delivery system.

Many participants noted that the settlement process is difficult for newcomers and regardless of the services that are put in place, the settlement process can never be a completely easy or happy experience. However, they felt that a good delivery system could help make the process less painful and faster.

Ultimately, participants visualized a future in which immigrants would be well settled, integrated and fully contributing to Canadian society within a reasonable time after arrival in Canada (e.g., within three years). They pictured a country that is welcoming, supportive, helpful and happy to have immigrants. And they see Canadian citizens (including

individuals, employers, professional associations, governments, etc.) who value immigrants for their diverse knowledge, experience, skills and expertise, world views, and their contribution to Canada. This view of the future would be supported by a delivery system that is focused on the needs of the immigrant and his/her family and that is integrated, coordinated and flexible.

At each session, participants were asked to complete four main activities. First, they were given an overview of the needs identified by newcomers along with a list of potential solutions for each need developed by organizations in Phase 1. Based on these results and their own experiences, participants were asked to identify the most important needs and suggested solutions from Phase 1 and to expand upon the suggested solutions where possible. Secondly, they prioritized the most promising and/or relevant suggested solutions for consideration in the new joint strategy. Third, they were invited to con-

sider the needs of the three target groups consulted in Phase 1 (i.e., women, seniors and youth) and to suggest new solutions to meet these needs. Lastly, participants were involved in a creative process to explore improvements to the service delivery system for newcomers and provided some clear advice to governments as to what the future delivery system should look like.

Priority Solutions by Theme – Employers and Service Providers

The top three most promising and/or relevant suggested solutions put forward by the employer and service organization discussion groups have been clustered based on frequency: top priority solutions are those that were identified by amalgamating the results of theme-based discussions from each of the three sessions and identifying as the top priority those solutions that were suggested as a priority by participants in all three sessions; second priority solutions were suggested by participants in two of the three sessions; and those solutions that were suggested as a priority in only one session are listed as a third priority. The following are the top priority solutions under each theme:

■ **Employment** - With respect to the need to provide newcomers with guidance on their pathway to employment, employers and service providers felt that diagnostic and assessment tools must be provided and that governments (and others) must provide information to newcomers on a regular basis to clarify and inform them about labour market needs. They also indicated that it is a priority to address skills equivalency issues in order to improve the process for professional accreditation and recognition of newcomers' skills, experience and education. They encouraged governments to create more and better bridging programs and to develop work-oriented language training programs in order to improve newcomers' readiness for the job market.

■ **Better Information and Guidance and Initial Orientation** - Participants encouraged governments to implement all of the suggested solutions presented under the better information and guidance theme as they are all important to the successful settlement of newcomers. The priorities listed below represent those solutions that participants felt were most promising or relevant to begin addressing first.

Better information and guidance needs must be addressed along the full settlement pathway both before and after arrival in Canada. Personal guidance is a key element of providing better information and guidance. To properly implement this solution, employers and service providers suggested that governments create a one-stop shop for information and referral and they use and promote a variety of information delivery mechanisms for potential newcomers. They also recommended that governments create an advisory committee to advise governments on providing information to newcomers, including identifying information needs, recommending and advising on content and advising on how to deliver services. The committee should include representatives from service providers, (both settlement and mainstream services), regions, employment, and other areas where newcomers have needs. Finally, participants pointed out that unless service providers are adequately supported by governments, they will be unable to provide sufficient information and guidance to meet the needs of newcomers.

■ **Language and Education** - Participants encouraged governments to implement all of the suggested solutions presented under the language and education theme as they are all important to the successful settlement of newcomers. The priorities listed below represent those solutions that participants felt were most promising or relevant to begin addressing first.

Overall, participants recommended a more holistic, learner-centred approach to language

training. By focusing on the student in the design and delivery of language classes, programs can be more specialized and targeted to the learner, and more efficient overall. Classes should be sorted by criteria such as language level, age, gender, special needs and/or Francophone needs. As second priority, it is important to provide profession-specific language training for newcomers

■ **Cultural Integration** - Participants in all sessions noted a need to create a more welcoming environment for newcomers in Canada. Priority solutions that were suggested to address this need include creating programs to educate and inform Canadians' understanding of immigrants including the value and contribution they bring to the country and the challenges they face in settling. Participants also noted the importance of equipping and training people who serve newcomers as they are the first point of contact for many newcomers. These individuals need to be able to understand the needs of newcomers have knowledge of appropriate information and services for them and be able to offer the information and services where appropriate.

■ **Social and Emotional Support** - As a first priority, employers and service organizations recommended that governments implement those suggested solutions that provide newcomers with opportunities for one-on-one support including mentorship programs and the creation of community networks and support groups to share experiences, gain knowledge and seek informal counselling. They also suggested that family counselling both for couples and for families is an important element in the successful settlement of newcomers. Victims of domestic violence and seniors require specialized solutions with a focus on one-on-one counselling and targeted support services. Mental health services for newcomers, including access to psychological help, must be improved. In addition, service providers would benefit from training in this area in order to provide guidance and referral to new-

comers who require it and to be better able to sensitively and appropriately deal with newcomers who are suffering from mental health problems.

■ **Financial Stability** - Newcomers require financial stability especially when they are in the settlement phase, learning a second language and seeking employment. Service organizations noted that financial difficulties are most acute during the initial settlement phase; thus long-term support is required, especially for the first five years after arrival in Canada. A range of financial support mechanisms must be implemented to meet the varied needs of individual newcomers, including: encouraging Canadian financial institutions to change their policies and practices to better accommodate newcomers and to be more sensitive to their unique needs; and to provide newcomers with financial information and skills development opportunities so they can effectively manage their financial situation throughout the settlement process.

■ **Housing** - The need for affordable, appropriate housing is acute for newcomers especially in the first few weeks after their arrival in Canada. Providing temporary, subsidized housing for newcomers upon arrival and for a short time after arrival is an important solution to allow newcomers to focus on acquiring language and other skills, and gaining employment. To support this, governments should establish a service dedicated to providing information, services and training related to housing for immigrants.

■ **Health** - As a first priority for meeting the health needs of newcomers, solutions related to health must be culturally appropriate; not only must health care workers be sensitive to cultural diversity but the services themselves must be offered in a manner appropriate to different cultures (e.g., some female newcomers cannot/will not visit a male doctor).

The Newcomer Perspective

Newcomers participating in Phase 2 were divided into two groups. The first group, referred to as the Mixed Newcomer Group, consisted of a range of individuals from different countries, age groups and target groups. Participants were asked to pick the most important needs and/or most promising solutions and to flesh it out. The second newcomer group was composed of individuals from one of the three target groups: women, youth and seniors. These groups were asked to recommend solutions relevant to the specific needs of their target group.

On balance, the newcomer groups in all Phase 2 sessions agreed that the priority needs and suggested solutions identified by service organizations and employers are relevant and important to them. However, the discussion focus and main priority for the mixed newcomer groups in all sessions was employment although language (conversational and for the workplace), health (e.g., address the 3-month waiting period for OHIP) and financial stability (e.g., at least for the first five years) were also considered to be high priorities.

Senior newcomers noted the need to provide initial orientation for seniors and help them find employment as soon as they arrive in Canada to ensure that they can contribute productively to Canada for as long as possible. Tailored opportunities for employment, volunteering, language training and health services are needed to meet the special needs of seniors. They also pointed out the need to ensure that mainstream services are tailored to seniors (e.g., health needs include hearing aids, dentures, mental health; they may have special insurance needs; special dietary needs accommodated in food banks, etc.). The group did not indicate a particular order of priority on these suggested solutions although they did emphasize the need for employment and earlier access to Old Age Security.

Education was the top priority for youth newcomers; information and guidance, language and employment also concerned youth. They emphasized

the need for youth-specific solutions since youth needs, experiences and ways of addressing issues are distinctly different from those of an adult.

The newcomer women focused the bulk of their discussion on the issue of employment. They noted that financial independence is a priority for newcomer families and for women thus making it extremely important for them to find appropriate employment commensurate with their skills and experience.

Most Promising and Relevant Suggested Solutions - Overall

The initial priorities identified during the group discussion by theme formed the set of most promising and/or relevant suggested solutions on which participants individually voted for their top priorities. Some participants were concerned with the prioritization exercise and urged governments to use the lists of priorities developed in Phase 2 as a starting point and to consider the full package of suggested solutions over time as they continue to improve the settlement and language delivery system.

The consolidated results for all three Phase 2 sessions overall and by stakeholder group are summarized in the main body of this report. The top fifteen most promising and/or relevant suggested solutions overall include (in order of priority based on total number of individual votes in all three sessions):

1. With respect to employment, provide bridging programs to help facilitate newcomer entrance into the Canadian work place
1. With respect to financial stability, establish a range of support mechanisms to assist newcomers throughout the settlement process²
2. With respect to information and guidance, ensure that information and guidance is available through a variety of delivery mechanisms before arrival in Canada (e.g., internet-based with

² In some cases, two or more solutions are listed with the same level of priority; these solutions received the same number of votes by participants and are thus listed at the same level of priority.

- profiles and general and specific information, personalized information from NGOs and embassies, and e-mail access to Canadian organizations)
3. With respect to social and emotional support, offer family counselling to newcomers
 4. With respect to employment, implement strategies to help newcomers start the process of preparing for and looking for work before they leave their source countries
 4. With respect to health, make sure that health services are more culturally sensitive
 5. With respect to housing, provide community-based information about housing including information about shelters and low cost or subsidized housing (existing immigrant communities could help with this)
 5. With respect to information and guidance, provide support to service providers to ensure they have the resources (e.g., financial, human, infrastructure) to provide information and guidance to newcomers)
 6. With respect to cultural integration, provide more structured training about Canadian culture to newcomers
 7. With respect to employment, offer flexible development models
 8. With respect to information and guidance, provide personal guidance to newcomers supported by a coordinated information and assessment network with regularly maintained personal links and regional access. Personal guidance should be culturally appropriate and available to newcomers in a way that is sensitive to their needs.
 9. With respect to information and guidance, ensure that information and guidance is available through a variety of delivery mechanisms after arrival in Canada
 10. With respect to language, provide professional specific language training
 11. With respect to employment, address skills equivalency
 11. With respect to employment, provide incentives to employers
 12. With respect to employment, provide one-on-one employment counselling to newcomers
 13. With respect to employment, create better linkages between the companies who have jobs to offer (including government) and newcomers
 14. With respect to employment, educate and involve employers in solutions
 14. With respect to language, provide individualized, needs-based language training (e.g., profession specific, learner centred, based on language objectives and adapted to skill level)
 15. With respect to language, change the service provision framework so it is oriented to the learner

Most Promising and Relevant Suggested Solutions - by Stakeholder Group

Priorities were also tabulated by stakeholder group. The four stakeholder groups (i.e., employers, settlement organizations, language service providers and newcomers) each indicated those solutions that they felt were most relevant and promising from among the common list of suggested solutions.

As their top priority, **settlement service providers** noted the importance of providing personal guidance to newcomers, supported by a coordinated information and assessment network with regularly maintained personal links and regional access. Personal guidance should be culturally appropriate and available to newcomers in a way that is sensitive to their needs. Secondly, they pointed to the need to provide adequate support to service providers to ensure that information and guidance is available to newcomers when they need it. Third, settlement service providers urged governments to establish a range of financial support mechanisms to assist new-

comers throughout settlement process; family counselling services are needed to address social and emotional support needs for immigrants; and health services must be made more culturally sensitive. Fourth, they would like to see a range of delivery mechanisms used to meet newcomers' information and guidance needs before and after arrival in Canada (e.g., web profiles, personalized information from NGOs and embassies, and e-mail access to Canadian organizations). The fifth priority is to provide information on housing to newcomers.

Language service providers would like to see training and incentives offered to employers to encourage them to hire newcomers as the first priority for moving forward. Second priorities include establishing a range of financial support mechanisms to assist newcomers through the settlement process and using and promoting a variety of delivery mechanisms to ensure that newcomers receive the information and guidance they need. Third, they want to provide bridging programs to newcomers to introduce them to the work place. With respect to language, language service providers focused their priorities on changing the service provision framework so that it is oriented to the learner (third priority) and offering ESL summer classes for youth (fourth priority). They also noted the importance of providing support to service providers and using and promoting a variety of delivery mechanisms to ensure that newcomers receive the information and guidance they need. Finally, language service providers feel it is important to educate and work with professional organizations to help them see the value of hiring immigrants.

Employer's top five suggested solutions include providing bridging programs, educating and involving employers, providing more structured training about Canadian culture to newcomers, starting the employment process before leaving the source country and providing individualized, needs based language training for newcomers (e.g., profession-specific training).

Newcomer's top five suggested solutions include establishing a range of financial support

mechanisms to assist newcomers throughout settlement process and providing information about housing for newcomers. Related to employment, newcomers would like to see governments focus on providing bridging programs and one-on-one counselling, flexible development models and helping newcomers start the process of preparing and searching for employment before leaving their home country.

Suggested Solutions to Meet the Specific Needs of Target Groups

During the second portion of each session, organizations and employers were asked to consider the needs of one target group (women, youth and seniors) and to develop a list of suggested solutions that might meet the needs of that particular target group.

Suggested Solutions for Women

Regarding the needs of women, participants noted the importance of providing personal support for women (along with information). They also pointed out that offering better support to women includes solutions that not only address women's needs but also the needs of children and the family as a whole. Service providers may need additional training and resources to provide programs targeted directly to women. Financial support is important for women and support must be made available in forms that can be accessed by women only. Some potential solutions to meet women's needs include:

- Develop government programs to increase awareness among immigrant women of spousal abuse, societal views, human rights, the repercussions of abuse, laws, rights and choices (e.g., legal remedies, tools, birth control, health, feminist views, etc.) among immigrant men, women and communities and to help newcomers understand that violence is not acceptable in Canada.
- Ensure that settlement agency staff (and others dealing with immigrants) are aware of, sen-

sitive to and trained to deal with issues of abuse so that they can provide referral services, case coordination and personal support for women “to walk with them.”

- Partner agencies involved with abuse prevention with ESL, LINC and local schools to create spousal abuse curriculum (this has been done at one Toronto District School Board LINC school). Printed information and opportunities for small gatherings (e.g., coffee chats) to discuss abuse prevention could be offered through schools as well.
- Create informal childcare groups (e.g., co-op childcare groups)
- Fund parenting centres (e.g., in schools) to give single parents a place to meet other parents while giving their children learning and playing opportunities
- Offer a variety of diversity training programs to help sensitize mainstream organizations and service providers to issues faced by newcomer women (e.g., women’s needs, cultural context, diversity, etc.).
- Offer financial, emotional, family and childcare support to women to facilitate involvement in social activities
- Hold afternoon or evening gatherings for women in local schools (or other community-based locations) such as peer support groups, networking sessions, social opportunities
- Hold health support groups in ethnic communities
- Provide additional information about housing directed specifically to women (e.g., regarding issues such as paying bills, safety and running a household in Canada)
- Provide seed money for women to start small business (e.g., micro loans, low interest loans, interest forgiveness), and small business training for women

Suggested Solutions for Youth

Participants pointed out that the definition of youth varies across governments and organizations making it difficult to develop consistent programs for youth. Thus, they recommended that governments adopt a consistent age definition for youth. They also recommended that the different developmental ages of youth must be addressed in any programs that are developed for youth. Participants also noted that there are gaps in the current discussion around youth issues including the needs of homeless, troubled youth and issues around the reunification of families. The need for youth programming for Canadian youth was also highlighted. Participants suggested that youth programs should be inclusive and involve both Canadian and newcomer youth. Some potential solutions suggested by participants during the Phase 2 discussions include:

- Recognize that some newcomer youth (up to 29 years old) are already professionals when they come to Canada. Create new or refocus existing programs to address their needs
- Involve employers in career counselling in schools
- Create a “buddy system” between existing and new students
- At point of entry into the school system, undertake mandatory assessment of student’s abilities, experiences and plans (e.g., math and English skills, previous success in school, future plans). Use this assessment to develop and implement individualized solutions (with referral as needed)
- Provide information and orientation sessions about expectations in school and community (and how to integrate) to parents and youth. Offer opportunities for youth to learn about how to integrate into the Canadian school system
- Educate parents about youth health issues (e.g., learning disabilities, ADHD etc.); and educate mainstream organizations to recognize issues

that are related to cultural differences and the immigrant experience (e.g., not to misdiagnose issues based on cultural differences)

- Educate youth and parents about the existence of extracurricular activities and their importance to the success of their school career (e.g., show link between excellence in sports and academics)
- Continue to fund school and community sporting facilities (e.g., pools)
- Offer leadership development opportunities, with emphasis on goal and life planning
- Take a holistic approach to youth settlement; recognize and support links between after school programs, academic programs, social integration, etc.
- Ministry of Education and/or school boards should require that their programming (and staff) reflects cultural diversity (municipalities, sport/recreation)
- Offer leadership development opportunities, with emphasis on goal and life planning
- Take a holistic approach to youth settlement; recognize and support links between after school programs, academic programs, social integration, etc.
- Ministry of Education and/or school boards should require that their programming (and staff) reflects cultural diversity (municipalities, sport/recreation)

Suggested Solutions for Seniors

Regarding the needs of seniors, participants in one session noted that different strategies may be needed for seniors depending on the age group being addressed but regardless of age, employment was highlighted as a key issue for seniors. Participants noted that stereotypes and age barriers must be addressed both generally and for employment. They also suggested that frontline staff would benefit from additional training regarding seniors' is-

ues. Some potential solutions suggested by participants during the Phase 2 discussions include:

- Educate and support employers to continue to remove age as a barrier to employment
- Encourage small-scale entrepreneurship; offer micro loans in the form of a cooperative program for trading
- Offer additional financial support to seniors by offering OAS sooner (reduce residency requirement to 2 years), or other means
- Fund opportunities, at the community level, for free or low cost programs that allow for social interactions/integration with other seniors (e.g., day programs, fitness groups, computer classes, city tours, etc.)
- Connect immigrant seniors with immigrant youth in a variety of programs (e.g., seniors teaching culture to youth; youth teaching seniors language)
- Enhance community health services for seniors by ensuring that they are multilingual and sensitive to seniors' needs
- Develop a program that fosters one-to-one tutoring opportunities for seniors to practice conversational English

The Future Delivery System

At the end of the session, newcomers, service organizations and employers worked together in small mixed groups to develop a view of an improved future delivery system for settlement and language services. They explored creative ways to improve the service delivery system for newcomers, considered the types of services that should be provided as well as when, where and how they should be provided and by whom.

There was strong commonality in the vision of the future and the views of the future delivery systems presented by participants at the three Phase 2 sessions. In all sessions, the future delivery system was needs-based, goal-oriented and took a pathway

approach. It was built around personal service and provided choices in services for newcomers in their local communities. The future delivery system will be centred on a one-stop shop for central assessment and referral supported by a coordinated and integrated delivery system built on partnerships and coordinated planning and evaluation. It was also characterized by trained settlement and language staff.

- **Needs-based** - The future delivery system will be designed, funded and delivered based on the needs of immigrants (individually and as a family unit).
- **Pathway Approach** - The system will deliver services to newcomers along the full settlement pathway from pre-arrival, arrival and ongoing. It will incorporate a diagnostic and case management approach so each newcomer's individual pathway is assessed and tailored to his/her evolving circumstances and he/she is provided with guidance on the path.
- **Goal Oriented** – The system will be goal oriented. Newcomers' needs and expectations will be assessed and a goal oriented individual plan prepared and adjusted over time to fit individual circumstances with regular updates on progress toward personal targets.
- **Personal Service** - Immigrants will be provided with opportunities to make personal connections with service providers and other organizations, Canadian officials, Canadian citizens and others (as appropriate) before and after they arrive in Canada.
- **Choice** - Newcomers will be able to access the services of their choice, in the language of their choice, when and in the manner that is best for them. More services will be available in French for Francophone newcomers.
- **Central Assessment and Referral** - A 'one-stop shop' for information, assessment and referral services will be available to newcomers on arrival.
- **Coordinated and Integrated Delivery System** – Within a community, service provider organi-

zations will coordinate their interests and services through an agreed upon coordinating model.

- **Local Delivery** - The delivery system will be characterized by local delivery of services allowing newcomers to access services in their own communities. Local delivery will be supported by the central information, assessment and referral hub mentioned above.
- **Flexible** - In order to provide needs-based services over time, the system must be flexible enough to change as newcomers' needs change. Thus, it must be supported by funding mechanisms that are flexible, long-term and outcome oriented. And, it must be characterized by strong communication and integration among government, service providers and mainstream services.
- **Happy settlement workers** - One of the foundations of a successful delivery system is well-trained and appropriately compensated settlement workers.
- **Partnerships** – The government role in the future delivery system is critical but its role must be performed in concert with other players (other governments and government departments, other SPOs, mainstream services, employers, ethnic communities, etc.).
- **Accountability and Continuous Learning** - The delivery system will be held accountable for its success using an outcome oriented measurement process, collaboration and immigrants' needs as the basis.
- **Information as the Foundation** - Successful settlement and a good delivery system will be supported by current, accurate and complete information. Participants envision information that is provided to newcomers in a variety of formats so that immigrants can choose the method that is most useful to them at a particular time, and can access general information and/or specific information relevant to them at a particular time.



FINAL ADVICE FROM NEWCOMERS

In Toronto and Ottawa, the mixed newcomer groups provided a list of main messages that they would like to leave with other participants and the federal and provincial governments. In addition, the youth and women's target groups provided advice to governments about how to help improve the settlement process for youth and women. The final advice from these groups included (without any order of priority): respect who we are and what we offer, support employment, provide the right information to us, deliver quality services, involve others in service delivery (e.g., NGOs, communities, etc.), improve health care services and offer additional services for youth and women.

Concluding Thoughts

Overall, participants in both Phases 1 and 2 urged governments to embrace this opportunity for change. They recognized that the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement creates an opportunity for the Governments of Canada and Ontario to address settlement and language issues in new ways. They encouraged governments to coordinate their efforts, identify and make use of best practices and overall, to think and act innovatively to address the issues and suggestions raised by newcomers and organizations. They noted that the governments have a responsibility to be accountable to organizations and service agencies about the changes that are being made as a result of these consultations, the agreement and the new funding. They encouraged 'real' implementation of recommendations, followed by concrete tracking of results and follow-up with organizations and newcomers to report on progress. They also suggested that governments involve newcomers in the design of programs and services as much as possible to ensure that services meet newcomer needs effectively.