A NEW DIRECTION:
ONTARIO’S IMMIGRATION STRATEGY

2016 PROGRESS REPORT
OUR VISION

A new direction for immigration in Ontario – attracting highly skilled workers and their families, supporting diverse communities and growing a globally-connected economy.
I am pleased to present this progress report on *A New Direction: Ontario’s Immigration Strategy*. When this strategy was released in 2012, our ministry committed to making regular progress reports. Over and above honouring that commitment, the process of looking back and assessing how successful we have been in achieving our goals is an important one. This has been a year in which we have made steady progress.

The plight of millions of refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria has captured the attention of people world-wide this past year. Canada took a leadership position and welcomed more than 33,000 resettled refugees from this conflict between November 2015 and the end of September 2016. Of those, more than 14,500 were settled in welcoming communities across Ontario. Ontario’s rapid response to the large number of refugees arriving in such a short time period was made possible in part by the existing immigrant and refugee supports already in place in our province – supports that routinely help welcome and settle approximately 100,000 immigrants each and every year. Our government reacted quickly to ensure frontline responders had the additional support they needed, and created a Syrian Refugee Resettlement Secretariat to ensure that ministries across government were able to provide seamless and coordinated support for the thousands of refugees settling in the province.

Ontario responded well to this crisis. Numerous new and augmented supports were established to help support individuals and their families, as they tried to make sense of their new home. Our partner settlement agencies, municipalities and other organizations across the province helped ensure everyone had access to language training, housing, education, employment and health care. These services and programs are crucial, and thanks to our swift response, the necessary supplemental assistance was made available.
Support for immigrants and their families is a defining feature of our Immigration Strategy. Approximately 70,000 immigrants every year benefit from our English and French as a second language training, preparing them both for work in our province and for life in the communities where they have chosen to settle. In addition, our bridge training programs are a yearly success story, helping immigrants obtain the training they need to put their skills to work and contribute to Ontario’s economy.

We also continued working with the federal government this past year on ways to tear down the barriers that businesses face in attracting the kind of skilled workers needed to compete in a tough global economy. And, we continued discussions on Ontario’s request to nominate more individuals for permanent resident status.

As Ontario’s Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I can say with pride that 2016 was indeed a year of solid progress. I am confident that we are moving in the right direction, and shaping immigration to help Ontario prosper for years to come.

Laura Albanese
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

ATTRACTING A SKILLED WORKFORCE AND BUILDING A STRONGER ECONOMY 3

Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program 3
Minister’s Employers Tables 6
Improving the Immigration System 7
Office of the Fairness Commissioner 8

HELPING NEWCOMERS AND THEIR FAMILIES ACHIEVE SUCCESS 9

Resettling Refugees 9
Newcomer Settlement Program 15
Adult Non-Credit Language Training Program 16
Ontario Bridge Training Program 19
Language Interpreter Services 22
Municipal Immigration Programs 23
Francophone Immigration 25

LEVERAGING THE GLOBAL CONNECTIONS OF OUR DIVERSE COMMUNITIES 27

Licensing in Ontario’s Regulated Professions Training Program (Global Experience Ontario) 27

CONCLUSION 30
INTRODUCTION

This is the fourth progress report on Ontario’s first-ever Immigration Strategy, which was released in November 2012. The strategy is called *A New Direction: Ontario’s Immigration Strategy*. It is intended to be exactly that – a new approach to the way in which the province attracts, selects and supports immigrants.

Immigration to Ontario has been in decline since 2001. In that year, the province received over 148,600 permanent resident landings, accounting for 59.3 per cent of the total landings in Canada. In 2015, Ontario received over 103,600 permanent resident landings, or 38.1 per cent of the country’s total.

Ontario’s labour market relies on immigration, as does our overall economy. Our province will likely face serious skills shortages in the coming years unless we are able to attract new immigrants to the province, including more economic immigrants who are able to fill certain skilled positions. A major focus of *A New Direction* is attracting those workers. In addition it is also important that we continue to improve the ways in which we support immigrants and their families once they are here. If we want people to call Ontario home, it is imperative that we give them the support they need to settle and integrate.

The backdrop to our efforts this past year has been the continued unfolding of one of the worst humanitarian crises in recent history. The conflict in Syria has resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths. It has also caused millions of people – many of them families with young children – to flee in search of safety. This past year has been a somber reminder that we live in a world where many people are not fortunate enough to live in places as prosperous and safe as Ontario. The outpouring of support from Ontarians in communities across the province upheld our province’s long tradition of welcoming those fleeing war and oppression. Our province is dedicated to welcoming thousands of refugees from all over the world each year, and will continue to do so. Our Immigration Strategy contains many programs and initiatives designed to help and support them and other newcomers as they adjust to life in Ontario.
A New Direction establishes three overarching objectives for immigration in Ontario, along with a number of initiatives to achieve them. The three objectives are:

1. Attracting a skilled workforce and building a stronger economy
2. Helping newcomers and their families achieve success
3. Leveraging the global connections of our diverse communities

This report charts progress made on these objectives between October 2015 and October 2016.
ATTRACTION A SKILLED WORKFORCE AND BUILDING A STRONGER ECONOMY

Immigration is key to growth in Ontario. It is key to stimulating innovation, to growing our workforce and to bringing in the people who have the skills and abilities we need. It is also key to keeping us competitive in today’s global economy. The first of our Immigration Strategy’s objectives, therefore, is to attract the kinds of workers we need to grow our economy.

*Progress Made*

*Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program*

The province’s Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) supports employers in attracting and retaining the skilled workers they need to compete in today’s knowledge-based economy.
Through the OINP, Ontario is able to nominate individuals and their families for permanent resident status. Nominees typically include skilled workers, international students, entrepreneurs, and key staff of established foreign corporations seeking to expand into Ontario. Every year, the federal government provides provinces and territories with a specific nominee allocation.

Ontario successfully negotiated with Ottawa to increase the province’s 2014 nominee allocation from 2,500 to 5,200 in 2015. And, Ontario’s allocation for 2016 increased again, to 5,500.

To help ensure the province attracts the very best workers, students and entrepreneurs, Ontario has begun to refine the program. Last year, the OINP launched four new program streams: 1) the Human Capital Priorities Stream, 2) the French-Speaking Skilled Worker Stream, 3) the Entrepreneur Stream, and 4) the Corporate Stream.

The first two streams (Human Capital Priorities and French-Speaking Skilled Worker) allow Ontario to nominate individuals who have qualified for the federal government’s Express Entry pool, and who have the required education, skilled work experience, language ability, and other factors to help them successfully establish and integrate into Ontario’s labour market and communities. In the first six months following the launch of the Human Capital Priorities Stream and the French-Speaking Skilled Worker Stream, the OINP nominated more than 1,000 individuals.
The second two streams are business-focused. The Entrepreneur and Corporate Streams are designed to attract established international corporations and experienced entrepreneurs, as well as their new business ideas, talent and investment.

The OINP also launched an online application process to make it easier to register an Expression of Interest for the Entrepreneur Stream, make it easier to apply if invited, and improve processing times for applicants. The OINP will continue to streamline its business processes in 2017, and will launch additional online systems for all streams.

SUCCESS OF THE OINP

- 98% of nominees selected with a job offer remain in Ontario and are employed.
- 91% of employers are satisfied with the quality of work of their nominee.
- 86% of businesses saw tangible benefits from their nominees, including increased revenues, new contracts and new customers.
- OINP International Masters and PhD Graduate nominees report earnings similar to other recent graduates with similar qualifications three years after graduation (over $60,000 annually).
- Two-thirds of all Ontario universities have used the program since 2007 to retain world-class professors and deliver better education to Ontarians.
- Between 2007 and 2015, over 3,500 job vacancies were filled through the OINP, benefiting over 260 businesses.
Jeannette Mundinger Hardy: University Lecturer

Jeannette Mundinger Hardy, her husband and seven-year old daughter arrived in Thunder Bay from France on temporary working permits. Jeannette, who has a Masters in French as a Second Language, found a position teaching French at Lakehead University.

The family was disappointed to have to return to France when their temporary work permits expired, but Jeanette saw an opportunity to return to Ontario permanently. She was invited to apply for the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program under the French-Speaking Skilled Worker Stream. She was accepted, and six months later the family had permanent residency. Today, Jeanette is back teaching at Lakehead, and her family is settling into life in Thunder Bay.

“The City of Thunder Bay has warmly welcomed us and quickly helped us integrate into the community. There are tremendous professional opportunities here which have allowed us to thrive and have positively impacted our social and personal lives. I’m proud of the opportunity to transfer not only my knowledge of French, but also pass on some of my culture to the local community.”

Minister’s Employers Tables

Ontario’s Immigration Strategy recognizes that employers have an extremely important perspective on the selection of immigrants and their integration into the labour force. Annual Minister’s Employers Tables (METs) were established to provide insight into employers’ perspectives regarding the challenges and
opportunities of accessing the international talent required to increase global competitiveness. These tables have proven to be a big success.

Between November 2015 and January 2016, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration met with approximately 120 employers and led six roundtable discussions across Ontario. The discussions centered on how Ontario business can leverage a “global mindset” to expand into emerging markets around the world by tapping into the international skills and experience of Ontario’s skilled immigrants.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce facilitated these roundtables, and the ministry is using the findings to identify opportunities to improve existing programs, and determine what could be done differently to improve program effectiveness.

*Improving the Immigration System*

One of Ontario’s priorities with respect to Canada’s immigration system is to reduce the barriers faced by businesses looking to bring top talent into this province. By removing these barriers, businesses are better able to attract skilled workers or even relocate their headquarters to Ontario. Our innovation economy depends on this.

Ontario is working with the federal government on a series of reforms to the immigration system designed to facilitate greater access for businesses to top global talent by introducing streamlined, more predictable and more transparent immigration processes. This would help grow Ontario’s innovation economy and create high-quality jobs by attracting technology-centric businesses – such as IT firms, or those that are developing advanced technologies like autonomous vehicles.

In its *Fall Economic Statement 2016* the Government of Canada announced the Global Skills Strategy, which will support the goal of attracting global talent and investment in order to create jobs and growth. Changes to the federal Express Entry system are to be implemented beginning in November 2016, and will support Ontario’s calls for a modern immigration system to better facilitate the attraction of global talent and innovation.
Office of the Fairness Commissioner

The Office of the Fairness Commissioner (OFC) was created by the *Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, 2006* to ensure fair access to regulated professions for everyone who is qualified, including people trained or educated outside Ontario.

As a result of recommendations made from a mandate review of the agency, the province introduced amendments to legislation through the Ministry of Economic Development and Growth’s Bill 27, Burden Reduction Act on September 27, 2016. If passed, the proposed amendments would help strengthen the OFC’s ability to deliver on its mandate of ensuring regulated professions and trades have fair registration practices.
HELPING NEWCOMERS AND THEIR FAMILIES ACHIEVE SUCCESS

Newcomers to this province face an array of challenges – from housing, to jobs, to schools for children. And, all this must be done while learning new languages and understanding new cultures. Newcomers to Ontario are looking for a home in which to live, work and raise their families. We owe it to them, and to ourselves, to help them settle and feel at home.

Resettling Refugees

Over 14,500 refugees from the Syrian conflict were settled in Ontario communities between November 2015 and the end of September 2016. This is a testament to the compassion of Ontarians and to the responsiveness and flexibility of this province’s settlement system. In fall 2015, as the full magnitude of the Syrian crisis was becoming clear, the Ontario government quickly began taking further steps to support the thousands of refugees who would be coming.

“Ontario’s strong, ongoing support for refugees and all newcomers is helping ensure local settlement agencies have the resources they need to foster a smooth transition to life as an Ontarian. By promoting the well-being of refugees, nurturing their skills and allowing their ideas to flourish, we are building a more diverse, successful Ontario.”

– Debbie Douglas, Executive Director, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)
Even before the first refugees starting arriving, the Premier announced Ontario’s willingness to help resettle 10,000 refugees by the end of 2016, and committed $10.5 million in new funding to help address the refugee crisis. This included $2 million for immediate overseas relief efforts through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the UN World Food Programme. It also included $8.5 million over 2.5 years to expedite refugee arrivals through support for private sponsorship, and support for refugee settlement and integration. And, in the 2016 Ontario Budget, the province committed an additional $2 million to support cross-government coordination efforts to help refugees from the Syrian conflict succeed in Ontario.

Capitalizing on the comprehensive provincial supports already in place for the thousands of immigrants and refugees from around the world who arrive each year, Ontario launched a Refugee Resettlement Plan, and established a cross-government coordinating secretariat, the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Secretariat (SRRS).

Since that time, the ministry has provided leadership, strategic guidance, sector collaboration, and addressed key issues related to the largest refugee resettlement movement in recent Canadian history. The ministry has, among other tasks:

- Supported the work of the Ministers’ Ad Hoc Committee on Refugees, which was formed in November 2015 to align the government’s approach to refugee resettlement.
- Established the Special Advisory Table on Refugees which brings together senior decision makers from across the Ontario government with leaders from municipalities and several sectors (including settlement, health, education, training, employment, and the faith-based community) to share information, address issues, and create solutions for the advancement of this large influx of refugees.
- Established four working groups comprised of government staff and key sector stakeholders focusing on:
  - Health and mental health
  - Education, literacy, training, and employment
  - Settlement, housing, and municipal supports
  - Private sponsorships and faith-based supports
• Worked together with members across the Ontario government to form an inter-ministerial research and evaluation working group to study successful refugee resettlement outcomes.

• Collaborated with several leading academics to form an Academics Advisory Table to provide advice and feedback on the work of the ministry.

This work is a prime example of what can be achieved when a government undertakes to work horizontally, by collaborating across ministries, working alongside other levels of government and engaging partner organizations to solve problems and achieve success.

WORKING TOGETHER TO SUPPORT REFUGEES

Successful refugee resettlement relies on a government-wide approach, and many ministries have collaborated in this effort over the past year. For example:

- The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care established a toll-free, multilingual Refugee HealthLine to connect refugees to health care providers.

- The Ministry of Education worked with school boards on settlement plans for students, and worked to support school boards in their efforts to promote mental health and respond to the social and emotional needs of refugee students and their families.

- The Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) partnered with the Ministry of Community and Social Services to establish a single point of contact to work with settlement agencies. A network of community services is supporting at-risk children and youth. MCYS’s Youth Outreach Workers Program was expanded to allow more workers to build trusting relationships with refugee youth.

In August 2016, the province allocated an additional $1.55 million in new funding to enhance refugee supports in communities across Ontario. Including the original provincial commitment of $8.5 million, MCI has now allocated over $10 million to support the work of 33 organizations that are implementing 43 different initiatives across the province. The funding is enhancing services for refugees, as well as helping to engage municipalities, employers and a range of other stakeholders.
in local planning and coordination. This work will promote the value that all refugees bring to their new communities, and improve settlement services and job prospects for new arrivals.

Including the more than 14,500 refugees from the Syrian conflict, between November 2015 and the end of September 2016 Ontario welcomed over 28,600 refugees from all over the world (almost 47 per cent of Canada’s total refugee intake). Newly funded projects will step up targeted supports to help all refugees meet their settlement and employment goals, complemented by specialized programming for refugee women and youth.
Early results from the province’s response to the refugee crisis are very promising (November 2015 to the end of September 2016):

Refugee settlement and integration services in communities receiving large numbers of refugees:

- Over 8,000 Syrian refugees have accessed MCI-funded services. With this support:
  - More than 5,500 adults have received language assessments, and 5,300 have participated in free language training.
  - Over 4,600 children are registered in Ontario schools. The province is working with school boards to ensure refugee students have the resources and supports to succeed.
  - Over 13,000 individuals have received OHIP cards.

Sponsorship supports to expedite refugee arrivals:

- 6,100 Ontarians participated in sponsorship training.
- 541 lawyers and 211 law students were trained on private sponsorship.
- Ontario leads the country on private sponsorship.

Sector capacity to promote welcoming communities, train front line workers and produce refugee orientation resources:

- Over 150 front line settlement workers have been trained on refugee mental health.
- 10,000 Arabic and 1,000 Armenian copies of the Orientation to Ontario handbook have been produced and distributed to organizations serving refugees.
Esmaeel Sharafadin Abofakher and Rahaf Alakbanee: Volunteers

Some people are natural born trailblazers. That is certainly the case with Esmaeel Sharafadin Abofakher and Rahaf Alakbanee, a young refugee couple from Syria who arrived in Ontario on February 6, 2016, and now call Toronto home. Although they have only been here a few months they have already made a huge difference in the lives of the people around them.

When they first arrived they were housed in a hotel with other Syrian refugees. Esmaeel noticed how the children had a great deal of pent-up energy. The former theatre coach organized a variety of theatre-based activities for the children, who were soon happily occupied.

Since then, the two have also signed up as volunteer facilitators for CultureLink’s Nai Syrian Children’s Choir, which provides Syrian children with weekly music education while their parents receive language training and other services.

“When they asked us, we couldn’t refuse,” Esmaeel said. “These are our children.”

Their most extraordinary contribution, however, is a kitchen project that Rahaf – a former teacher in Syria – and Esmaeel helped create to involve the refugee women. It is called the Newcomer Kitchen, and it gives Syrian women the opportunity to get together to prepare authentic dishes and make friends in their new country. The Newcomer Kitchen has been incredibly successful. Customers order their delicious food online. The meals sell out every week, and proceeds help run the project.
Esmaeel and Rahaf are the catalysts behind this project—both dedicate considerable hours every week to keep it going. To them, it is a way of giving back to the province and community that has taken them in. They are grateful for the support they have received from COSTI Immigrant Services—a settlement agency funded by the Ontario government—and they are overjoyed to have found a new home in Ontario. When the couple found out they were able to come here, “We felt like we were in a dream,” Esmaeel said. “Here we feel free, and safe.”

Newcomer Settlement Program

Settling in a new country can be difficult, and immigrants frequently face challenges in building their new lives. The Newcomer Settlement Program (NSP) was designed to help new Ontarians overcome these challenges by providing them with the information, tools, resources, and essential supports they need to integrate successfully and to contribute to society and the economy.

The NSP provides funding to community-based organizations to deliver settlement and integration supports in over 90 languages in more than 30 communities. The services help newcomers and refugees find housing, enroll their children in school, learn about life in Ontario, find employment and language-training supports, and develop social connections.
Ontario is allocating more than $22 million over the next two years to support 98 community based organizations in delivering 117 settlement projects throughout the province. The funding includes support for services for vulnerable populations, including almost $3 million in new funding to support 14 agencies across the province delivering settlement and integration services for at-risk newcomer youth. Services will increase access to supports for those newcomer youth with the highest needs, and provide them with opportunities to develop life skills. These projects will also aim to increase resiliency among refugee youth who have experienced trauma and war, and will support the well-being of newcomer families by reducing inter-generational conflict.

“Ontario’s strong support helps ensure that we can provide services targeted to meet the needs of the thousands of newcomers who choose to call our province home each year. We commend the province on their commitment to the vital work of settlement agencies across the province.”

– Maureen Fair, Executive Director, West Neighbourhood House

Adult Non-Credit Language Training Program

We know that English or French language skills are critical if immigrants are to succeed in the workplace and integrate into their new communities. The Adult Non-Credit Language Training Program provides English and French as a Second Language (ESL/FSL) training to eligible adult immigrants, so they can gain the language skills they need to work and live in Ontario.

The program supports adult immigrants whose first language is not English in improving their language skills so they can contribute more fully to Ontario’s society and economy. It also supports learner pathways between ESL/FSL programs and other adult education programs funded by the Ministries of Education and Advanced Education and Skills Development. For example, once immigrants have reached the required level of language proficiency, they can move on to take the necessary courses and/or obtain the necessary skills to get a high school diploma, or take post-secondary programs.
This past year, Ontario funded 13 new Language Training Projects to support and enhance the Adult Non-Credit Language Training Program. These include seven projects that will develop and pilot new e-learning programming to increase access to language training across Ontario. Courses to be developed will include those that are self-taught, instructor-led or supported, and a combination of both individual online and face-to-face instructor training.

In fall 2016, the government allocated up to $60 million through the Adult Non-Credit Language Training Program to help public and Catholic school boards across the province provide language training to about 70,000 immigrants in 2016/17. Similar funding support is allocated each year.

Maria Ruiz Alvarado: Business Owner

Maria Ruiz Alvarado arrived in Toronto from Mexico in 2003. She and her partner no longer felt safe as a same-sex couple living in that country, and they were looking to build new lives somewhere more accepting. Maria says she found more than acceptance in Ontario. She found a home.

“This is a safe place to be,” she says. “It is a peaceful place. It is where we both want to live for the rest of our lives.”

When she first arrived, Maria spent two years attending the ESL classes that the Government of Ontario makes available to all immigrants. She would have stayed longer, but the pressures of full time work made it impossible. But her English had progressed to the point that three years ago, once she had become a permanent resident, she was able to start her own business. She and her partner launched Anamara Cleaning Services. The company is doing well, and now Maria has once again enrolled in ESL at the Mimico Adult Learning Centre. She says she wants her English to get even better, so she can live and contribute in her new home.

“I am so grateful to Ontario for welcoming us, accepting who we are, teaching me English, and giving us the opportunity to start our own business. This is the best place to be.”
ADULT NON-CREDIT LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAM

Ontario’s language training program for immigrants is the largest in Canada, providing tuition-free ESL/FSL training to about 70,000 adult immigrants every year.

Over 4,000 ESL/FSL language courses are delivered across more than 325 locations in Ontario.

More than 5,500 adult refugees from the Syrian conflict have received language assessment, and 5,300 have participated in free language training.
“School boards are able to offer the Adult Non-Credit English and French as a Second Language (ESL/FSL) Program to immigrants thanks to the support of the Ontario government. The skills and knowledge acquired through ESL/FSL programs help participants prepare for future work and career opportunities. The friends they meet along the way help provide a rich base of support that helps to ease their transition into their new community.”

— Paula Dawson, Director of Education, Halton Catholic District School Board

Ontario Bridge Training Program

Every year, Ontario’s Bridge Training Program helps approximately 6,000 internationally trained professionals get the help they need to find jobs that match their skills and experience.

In 2015, there were 70 active Ontario bridge training projects across the province. These projects offer internationally trained individuals the occupation-specific training and services required to help them prepare for licensure in regulated professions, or to obtain work in highly skilled, non-regulated professions that correspond with their skills and experience. Since 2003, the Ontario Bridge Training program has helped more than 60,000 people.

70 active Ontario bridge training projects
across the province

More than 60,000 people
helped since 2003
The Ontario Bridge Training Program directly addresses the Immigration Strategy’s objective to grow a globally-connected economy by increasing the employment rate of highly skilled immigrants within their fields.

In August 2016, the province announced it is allocating $3.35 million over two years to support 11 new bridge training projects that will:

- Improve access to career assistance services for internationally trained immigrants, including career mentoring, employment events, language skills-training and a micro-loan program,
- Help employers recruit, hire and retain internationally trained immigrants with networking events, an online recruiting service and employer workshops, and
- Identify newcomers’ transferrable skills and alternate career pathways through, for example, mentoring events and the promotion of entrepreneurship.

**HELPING NEWCOMERS PUT THEIR SKILLS TO WORK**

Between October 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016:

- 4,690 skilled newcomers accessed a bridge training project
- 3,558 completed a bridge training project
- 308 achieved licensure in their regulated occupation
- 3,463 obtained employment in their field
Sarbjit Singh Chadha: Mechanical Engineering

Sarbjit Singh Chadha arrived in Toronto in 2003 at the age of 27. He had received a diploma in mechanical engineering in his native India, but opted to move to Ontario, where he thought there would be more opportunities for someone with his skills and training.

Once he arrived here, however, Sarbjit was forced to spend the next 12 years working various jobs, from security to factory work to housekeeping. He called it a vicious cycle, one that kept him so busy earning just enough money to scrape by and support his family that he had no time left to upgrade his skills and pursue the career he had dreamed of.

Then one day last year, Sarbjit read an article about the Ontario government’s bridge training program. He enrolled immediately. Sarbjit isn’t stuck in that vicious cycle any more. He completed the bridge training offering at Seneca College, and has already landed a job at Runnymede Health Centre, putting his skills as a mechanical engineer to good use.

“I am so lucky to live in a place where they offer this kind of program,” he says. “I have the career I want. I live in the place I want. And now I can give back. I am a happy man.”
“We’re delighted with the government’s further investment in the Ontario Bridge Training Program. We see first-hand how these opportunities for our internationally-trained newcomers make a difference in their lives and the positive effects they have on the community. Working in partnership with business and industry, we’re preparing our students to be career-ready and to contribute to a strong Ontario.”

– David Agnew, President, Seneca College

Language Interpreter Services

The Language Interpreter Services (LIS) program supports the delivery of spoken and sign language interpreter services for victims of domestic and/or sexual violence – including human trafficking – who do not speak English or French, or who are Deaf or hard of hearing. The service is designed to help improve victims’ access to needed services and supports such as social, health care, justice and law enforcement services.

LIS supports are delivered to victims year round (24 hours a day, seven days a week) in over 70 spoken languages, as well two sign languages: American Sign Language, which translates to English, and la langue des signes québécoise, which translates to French. More than 14,000 victims of domestic and/or sexual violence and 700 service providers across Ontario benefited from LIS-funded services in 2015-16.
Municipal Immigration Programs

The Municipal Immigration Information Online (MIIO) and the Municipal Fund – Innovative Immigration Initiatives (MF-I3) programs help municipal governments meet the local needs of the province’s newcomers, and maximize the benefits of immigration for all parts of the province.

The MIIO program supports municipal governments in developing and enhancing websites that promote municipalities as attractive settlement destinations and deliver local immigration information. These websites highlight local labour market gaps, foster employer engagement, and provide useful information for international students and Francophone immigrants.

In all, the MIIO program has supported 30 local immigration portals that provide online information to over 130 communities across Ontario – including a website dedicated to highlighting Francophone immigration opportunities and profiling communities with French-language services in 19 local communities. This past year, enhancements were made to seven municipal sites, including three that provide information in French. Two new municipal portals are also being developed.

The MF-I3 program was launched in 2014-15, and supports municipal projects that promote innovative approaches to attracting and integrating immigrants.

Now in its second year, it is supporting projects in eight municipalities across the province. Successful pilots include the use of local libraries as community hubs for immigration information in Simcoe County, and events to promote community networking for international students in Ottawa.
The Shaikh family: Participants and Volunteers

Noushi and Azim Shaikh and their three children immigrated to Canada from Pakistan. In 2014, Azim found work in Ontario as a chemical engineer, and the family now calls Sarnia home.

Earlier this year, the three Shaikh children – Afnan aged 16, Anusha aged 13, and Lamees aged nine – registered for a free four-day art workshop, which is just one experience offered by the Sarnia-Lambton Immigrant Youth Engagement Program (IYEP). The program was funded through the Ontario Municipal Fund – Innovative Immigration Initiatives in 2014, and is administered by the County of Lambton’s Social Planning Department and the Judith & Norman Alix Art Gallery. The program reaches out to local immigrant youth and increases their participation in their community. Among many things, the program teaches immigrant youth about life in Ontario, introduces them to various career paths, and above all, lets them have fun and meet new friends.

Lamees has registered for a number of additional free IYEP workshops held weekly at the art gallery, and Afnan and Anusha have even signed on as volunteers with the program. All three youth say they would definitely recommend IYEP workshops and activities to other immigrant youth.

“The program is a great opportunity for us to convert our dreams into reality,” says Afnan. “It helps teenagers like me explore different fields of work and helps narrow down what path I’d like to take later on in life. I also love volunteering as it gives me more references and experience not just in the workplace, but also helps me learn about life from my peers.”
Francophone Immigration

Francophone immigration to Ontario is a priority. Over the past ten years, annual Francophone immigration has fluctuated between 2.1 per cent and 3.4 per cent. The Ontario Immigration Strategy establishes an ambitious goal of five per cent.

The Group of Experts on Francophone Immigration was formed following a recommendation by the French Language Services Commissioner. The Group is composed of nine Francophone community leaders, representing different sectors, geographic areas and areas of expertise, as well as two ex-officio government representatives. The Group has submitted a report to help inform a provincial plan for recruiting, integrating and retaining Francophone immigrants.

The Group’s recommendations provide the province with useful guidance on where to focus efforts and resources to increase Francophone immigration to Ontario. The province will continue to work with its partners, such as Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the Office of Francophone Affairs, as well as other ministries on how to best implement the recommendations in the Group of Experts’ report related to promotion, selection, pre-arrival, arrival, settlement and integration.

The province has already taken action that is consistent with some of the Group of Experts’ recommendations. One of the main recommendations is to enhance overseas promotion aimed at attracting Francophone immigrants to Ontario.

The ministry has enhanced its efforts to attract Francophone immigrants to Ontario, and promotes the province internationally as a destination of choice. This includes promoting Ontario at Destination Canada (Canada’s main international Francophone immigrant recruitment event) and at Canada Week hosted by the Embassy of Canada in Paris, France. The province also increased its media presence through the internationally renowned L’Express magazine’s 2016 annual special edition called Settling in Canada, and enhanced the content and reach of its promotional brochure, Ontario – Le Bon Choix, which is distributed at key missions overseas. In addition, the ministry delivers Ontario-focused webinars for prospective Francophone immigrants via the Canadian embassy in Paris. These webinars have reached hundreds of people from a wide array of countries, including: Algeria, Belgium, Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Djibouti, Luxembourg, Morocco, Senegal and Tunisia, as well as the French overseas region.
of Guadeloupe. The ministry also launched a municipal immigration web portal dedicated to profiling immigration opportunities in our province’s Francophone communities.

Gilles Kamdem: Management Accounting

When Gilles Kamdem arrived in Ontario from his native Cameroon in 2012, he had one main focus – to provide a better life for his wife and two children. Gilles had trained in Cameroon as an accountant, and hoped he could apply those skills to find a job and help settle his family here in Ontario. What he had not counted on, however, was discovering that his skills needed upgrading.

Fortunately for Gilles, he discovered Arrimage Emploi, one of Ontario’s Francophone bridge training programs delivered by La Cité collégiale. Thanks to the Ottawa-based program, Gilles was able to upgrade his accounting skills. He was then able to find a job doing the management accounting for a construction firm. Gilles lives in Ottawa and says that his life today is good, and secure. And he credits his bridge training with more than just a skills upgrade.

“Of course, it is great that they helped me improve my skills,” he says. “But they also taught me about Canada and living in Ontario. That made things so much easier. I’ll always be grateful for that.”
LEVERAGING THE GLOBAL CONNECTIONS OF OUR DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

*Licensing in Ontario’s Regulated Professions Training Program (Global Experience Ontario)*

Global Experience Ontario (GEO) is a government resource centre for internationally trained immigrants, which provides information to help them become licensed to work in non-health regulated professions and the skilled trades.

GEO delivers the “Licensing in Ontario’s Regulated Professions” training program, which provides employment counsellors and settlement service providers with information and resources on licensing for internationally trained individuals in Ontario’s regulated professions.
The goal of the training program is to support service providers in helping internationally trained individuals become licensed and build their careers in Ontario. The sooner individuals achieve licensure, the sooner they can start building careers commensurate with their skills and experience. The program teaches service providers how to guide internationally trained individuals through the licensing process for their professions, how to advise individuals on related occupations and alternative career pathways, and how to refer clients to appropriate support programs and resources for licensing and employment.

From October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2016, the program was delivered 31 times in nine cities to 585 participants. Since the program was launched in April 2014, it has been delivered in 19 cities across Ontario, and over 1,300 staff from 242 organizations have participated in the training.

And over this same time period, GEO delivered webinars explaining licensing processes to over 380 internationally trained accountants, engineers, teachers, early childhood educators, social workers and tradespersons in close to 60 countries.
FEEDBACK ON GLOBAL EXPERIENCE ONTARIO: A TRAINING SUCCESS STORY

GEO has collected feedback from service providers who have participated in the training program since 2014. Key findings for 2015-16 based on a survey conducted at the training workshop, and a two-month follow-up survey include:

- After attending the workshop, respondents indicated a substantial increase in their knowledge levels in various areas, including: the regulatory environment, general licensing processes, and available programs and supports for internationally trained individuals.

- 75% of respondents felt that the amount of information presented and the workshop length were just right for their needs.

- 95-98% of respondents gave top ratings for the overall quality of the training workshop, including the presentation format and clarity, and the knowledge of facilitators.

- 99% of respondents stated they would recommend the training workshop to other service providers.
CONCLUSION

Ontario’s Immigration Strategy recognizes the simple fact that immigration is critical to Ontario’s future – because it is through immigration that we have built, and will continue to build, a strong economy and vibrant communities. Today’s global economy is driven by skill and innovation, and we need to continue to attract skilled newcomers to ensure that we don’t fall behind.

A New Direction establishes three overarching objectives for immigration in Ontario, along with a number of processes and initiatives to achieve them. The three objectives are:

1. Attracting a skilled workforce and building a stronger economy
2. Helping newcomers and their families achieve success
3. Leveraging the global connections of our diverse communities
As reflected in this report, this past year has seen some extremely positive developments. In addition to our response to the refugee crisis, we have continued to work closely with the federal government to increase our ability to attract and retain the skilled workers we need to build a competitive economy. In addition, we have continued to work to support and provide services for individuals once they have arrived. We work to ensure that Ontario is a place where people can settle and raise families in communities where they feel at home. Noteworthy this past year has been the progress we have made in improving access to language training in both English and French. Thousands of newcomers also benefited from our bridge training programs, and are better able to find work that matches the knowledge and skills that they have brought to this province.

Ontario is a wonderful place to live. For centuries so many people have travelled across the globe to join with Indigenous peoples to create the Ontario we know today. The great truth about Ontario is that the people who have settled here have made it an even more wonderful place to live. Both our economy and our communities benefit as a result. This is a cycle that we must never allow to end, and it is why our Immigration Strategy is so very important. It keeps us moving in the right direction, and we are making sure and steady progress.