Minister’s Message

In 2015, our province took an important economic and cultural step forward by passing the *Ontario Immigration Act, 2015* (OIA). Among other things, this legislation will facilitate Ontario’s work with the federal government on the recruitment, selection and admission of highly skilled immigrants to Ontario, and it clearly states that Ontario’s vision is based on inclusivity and cultural diversity.

This is critically important. Ontario is the number one destination for newcomers to Canada. We take pride in being the destination of choice for immigrants to this country, and we remain grateful for their contribution to our province’s economic success and social well-being. The OIA will help ensure that we can continue to attract the people we need to help keep our province strong.

The passing of the OIA is but one of several important developments in immigration this past year. We also signed a new five-year Canada-Ontario Agreement on Provincial Nominees, strengthening our partnership with the federal government when it comes to the selection of economic immigrants. We more than doubled our annual immigrant nominee allocation from 2,500 to 5,200. To help us achieve our goal of five per cent Francophone immigration, we formed a Group of Experts to help us develop a plan for promoting, recruiting, welcoming, integrating and retaining Francophone immigrants in Ontario. And, we launched the first ever immigrant selection stream dedicated to Francophone immigrants.

Looking back on the past year, I can say with real pride that we have continued the journey we began in 2012 when we released Ontario’s first ever Immigration Strategy, entitled *A New Direction*. It was a strategy for attracting highly skilled workers and their families, supporting diverse communities and growing a globally connected economy. *A New Direction* contained a commitment to report to the people of Ontario on the progress we are making in immigration. We released the first of these reports in 2014. As Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade, I am proud to release this second progress report.

The Honourable Michael Chan  
Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade
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Introduction

In November 2012, the Government of Ontario released the province’s first ever immigration strategy, entitled *A New Direction*. The new strategy was a direct response to a number of emerging factors that could impact Ontario’s economy and Ontarians’ quality of life, such as an aging population, low birth rates and reduced numbers of economic immigrants destined for Ontario.

In 2014, Ontario received 95,793 permanent resident landings, accounting for 36.8 percent of the total admissions to Canada. This is compared to 148,639 (59.3 per cent of total landings to Canada) in 2001.

The simple fact is that Ontario’s labour market will face serious skills shortages unless we are able to attract new immigrants – including economic immigrants who are needed to fill skilled job positions – and at the same time improve the ways we are helping and supporting immigrants and their families.

*A New Direction* is a strategy for doing these things. It 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.

This report charts the progress made towards meeting these objectives between October 2014 and October 2015.
Forging Ahead

1. Attracting a Skilled Workforce and Building a Stronger Economy

Our economy depends on a strong and skilled workforce and immigration plays a key role. The first of our Immigration Strategy objectives recognizes that basic fact. It also recognizes that in addition to simply needing more immigrants to Ontario, we need more people coming in who have the skills and abilities to help us grow our economy.

Progress Made

*Ontario Immigration Act, 2015*

Without question, the most significant immigration development in the last several months was the passage of the *Ontario Immigration Act, 2015* (OIA). On May 28, 2015, the bill passed third reading with unanimous support in the legislature. The act received Royal Assent on the same day.

The OIA positions Ontario as a full partner in immigration with the federal government. It gives this province a framework to design, deliver, and manage a larger and more complex selection program, while giving Ontario the authority to attract and select global talent to promote business growth. This is important because an enhanced role in immigration selection may help Ontario increase its percentage of economic class immigrants – thereby helping us meet our labour needs and grow our economy.

In addition, the OIA contributes to good governance by making the authority for Ontario’s selection programs clear and transparent. The act strengthens our ongoing efforts to deter fraud, detect misrepresentation, and increase transparency and information sharing with our immigration partners.

*Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program*

In July 2015, Ontario changed the name of its Provincial Nominee Program to the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP). The name change reflects our province’s increased role in selecting immigrants to Ontario. The OINP nominates individuals and their families for permanent resident status, and offers international students, foreign workers, and those with high education, skills, and language ability the opportunity to permanently live and work in the province. This helps our province’s employers compete globally for skilled, talented workers.
In May 2015, Ontario and the federal government signed a new five-year Canada-Ontario Agreement on Provincial Nominees, strengthening our partnership with the federal government when it comes to the selection of economic immigrants.

Ontario’s provincial nominee allocation was increased to 5,200 from 2,500 in 2015. This surpasses the objective of 5,000 set out in the Immigration Strategy.

Another key achievement was a substantial expansion of the nominee program. Two new streams were launched – the Human Capital Priorities and French-Speaking Skilled Worker streams. The new streams work with the federal Express Entry System to select individuals who have the work experience, education and language abilities to support our labour market.

“The Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program, delivered by Ontario’s Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade, has allowed the Perimeter Institute to retain some of the brightest minds in theoretical physics by nominating, for permanent residence – highly qualified foreign nationals who help address Perimeter’s human resource needs. As a result, the Institute is better able to pursue cutting-edge research, train the next generation of scientific pioneers, and conduct award-winning educational outreach and public engagement.”

Michael Duschenes,
Managing Director and Chief Operating Officer, Perimeter Institute
Growing up in India, Sasi Reddy knew for a very long time that he wanted to be a software developer. And to succeed, he knew he had to give himself the best education possible. He also wanted to live somewhere that would give him the best opportunity to thrive in his chosen profession. He chose Ontario – moving here in 2011 – and sought residency status by applying for the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program.

Sasi was accepted as a provincial nominee in 2013, and he has now been accepted as a permanent resident. He worked hard to obtain a Master of Computer Science degree from the University of Ottawa, and is now a software designer at the networking and software company, Ciena.

He is living the life he dreamed about growing up in India, and says he will forever be grateful.

“This was such a huge opportunity for me,” Sasi says. “It literally changed my life. I am proud and grateful to live in a place that gives people a chance to come here and contribute, and that’s exactly what I plan to do.”

Minister’s Employers Tables

Ontario’s Immigration Strategy recognizes the need for input from the province’s business sector. Therefore, Ontario holds annual Minister’s tables with the province’s employers to seek advice on our labour market needs, and the role of employers in the changing immigration system. Through these tables, Ontario builds a strong relationship with employers and better understands their needs and challenges.

The 2014 Minister’s Employers Tables were launched in October 2014 at the Economic Summit in Niagara-on-the-Lake with a specific focus on employer labour market needs. The launch event was attended by 24 business leaders from a number of sectors and regions across the province. This was followed by five regional consultations, in which ministry representatives focused on identifying local labour market needs, verifying regional labour market evidence and gauging employer awareness of immigration programs. The regional consultations were attended by more than 100 business leaders.
2. Helping Newcomers and their Families Achieve Success

The challenges facing newcomers to this province are many and varied - jobs, housing, schools, language, culture, etc. There is a great deal for them to learn and even more for them to do as they build new lives for themselves and their families. We owe them all the help and support we can give them, not just because it is the right thing to do, but because their success is our success.

Progress Made

Ontario’s Refugee Resettlement Plan

In response to the refugee crisis unfolding in the Middle East, Premier Kathleen Wynne announced a plan on September 12, 2015 to help resettle up to 10,000 refugees in Ontario by the end of 2016. The plan outlines concrete measures to increase the number of privately sponsored refugees coming to Ontario, and enhance settlement services for new refugees.

The government has committed $10.5 million over two and a half years to support the plan’s implementation. The new funding will be used to:

- Support Ontario community groups in their efforts to mobilize Ontarians to sponsor and welcome refugees.
- Provide advice, training and assistance to sponsors to help them navigate the sponsorship application process.
- Develop an assurance fund to reduce barriers to sponsoring refugees.
- Provide comprehensive, community-based supports for refugees, such as trauma counselling, settlement and employment assistance, and targeted integration programs for children and youth.
- Support United Nations agencies’ efforts to support refugees fleeing conflict and war.

95 NSP agencies provided services in over 90 languages

Helping more than 85,000 newcomers across the province settle and integrate successfully
The Refugee Resettlement Plan is part of the government’s broader vision to help newcomers and their families succeed in Ontario.

Newcomer Settlement Program

The Newcomer Settlement Program (NSP) helps newcomers succeed by providing them with the information, tools, resources, and community supports they need to integrate successfully, and contribute to the social, economic, civic, and cultural life of the province. Last year, 95 NSP agencies provided services in over 90 languages to help more than 85,000 newcomers across the province settle and integrate successfully. NSP services were also expanded to improve service access for underserved groups, including: Francophone immigrants, newcomer children and youth, and vulnerable populations such as refugees and migrant workers.

In 2014, in partnership with settlement agencies and colleges and universities, we also launched a pilot program – International Student Connect – to help international students settle and stay in Ontario. The program offers a series of orientation and settlement workshops about living and settling in Ontario that are tailored to the needs of international students.

Language Interpreter Services Program

The Language Interpreter Services (LIS) program enables victims of domestic and sexual violence – with language barriers, or who are deaf or hard of hearing – to access social, healthcare and legal services with the assistance of an interpreter. Interpreter services are available across the province on a 24-7 basis in more than 70 languages. In the past year, the LIS program served over 7,000 victims, and improved access to interpreter services for victims who are deaf or hard of hearing.
Wivine Nyamuli arrived in Ontario from the Democratic Republic of Congo. She didn’t know much about Ontario, but she did know that she wanted to live here, and she knew that if possible, she’d like to work with children. Thanks to the Ontario Bridge Training Program, she was able to enroll in the Early Childhood Education Program at College Boreal in October 2014.

Wivine was able to pursue an internship. She acquired the skills she needed, and demonstrated to herself and others that she had the passion and commitment required to teach children. And as a Francophone immigrant in a region where there is a shortage of French-speaking educators, she is in a position to make a valuable contribution to her adopted community. It is something she says she is thrilled to be able to do.

“I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in this Early Childhood Education program and to be able to pursue my career here in Ontario,” says Wivine.

Adult Language Training Program

Without either English or French language skills, newcomers to Ontario face almost insurmountable barriers to success, both in their communities and in their workplaces. The Adult Non-Credit Language Training Program provides English and French as a second language training to 70,000 eligible adult immigrants every year, so they can gain the language skills they need to work and live in Ontario.

Francophone Immigration

One of the top priorities of Ontario’s Immigration Strategy is to increase the number of Francophone newcomers to the province. We have set a target of five per cent Francophone immigration, and this past year, we took a significant step towards achieving this goal. In cooperation with the federal government, Ontario formed the Group of Experts on Francophone Immigration in June 2015. Eleven Francophone community leaders – representing different sectors, geographic areas and areas of expertise – are working to develop a report that will help inform a provincial plan for promoting, recruiting, welcoming, integrating, and retaining Francophone immigrants in Ontario. The group aims to release its report by spring 2016.
Since 2003, the program has helped close to 50,000 people in more than 100 professions to continue their careers in Ontario.

As mentioned above, Ontario launched a new stream under our OINP program – the French-Speaking Skilled Worker Stream – that targets French speakers who have the skills and experience to thrive in Ontario’s labour market. This makes Ontario the only jurisdiction that has an immigration stream dedicated to Francophone immigration.

Ontario Bridge Training Program

The Ontario Bridge Training Program helps internationally trained professionals put their skills and experience to work in Ontario. It offers them training and support in obtaining licenses to work in regulated professions, or finding employment in highly skilled, non-regulated professions. Since 2003, the program has helped close to 50,000 people in more than 100 professions to continue their careers in Ontario.

In 2014, over 5,400 internationally trained individuals accessed Bridge Training services and 1,244 were licensed – or are on track to becoming licensed – to practice in their profession. Moreover, 78 per cent of participants obtained in-field employment within 12 months of completing the program.
Meghna Thakur grew up in India, and she obtained an education in her chosen field of IT. However, shortly after graduating she got married and joined her husband in Canada. As a result, she was unable to gain any work experience before moving here. And that meant that when she arrived in Ontario, she faced a job market that she really had no way to enter.

That’s when she found the .NET Developer bridging program at Humber College. Through that program, she got an interview with ASL Consulting, one of the industry partners of the .NET Developer bridging program. Meghna aced the interview, and she was offered a job.

“I love coming in to work here because this is what I have wanted since I was 17. It was my dream to be a professional .NET Developer in Canada. I feel blessed,” says Meghna.

Municipal Immigration Programs

A big part of Ontario’s Immigration Strategy focuses on helping our province’s municipalities share in the benefits of immigration. That means finding ways of encouraging immigrants to settle in those municipalities, and supporting municipalities in attracting and welcoming newcomers. We are working in partnership with municipal governments to promote local employment and settlement opportunities for newcomers, and also to attract skilled workers, families, and international students.

We have developed a network of dedicated municipal immigration web portals that display the profiles of more than 130 Ontario communities promoting themselves to prospective immigrants. Municipalities with immigration web portals are the destination of over 90 per cent of the immigrant landings to Ontario. In 2014–2015, we expanded the network of Ontario municipalities involved in the Municipal Immigration Information Online program - with two more communities (the City of Belleville and the City of Cornwall) - receiving funding to develop dedicated immigration web portals in both English and French.
“The support of the province in helping to put Belleville and the entire Quinte Region on the map in terms of newcomer attraction, is a very welcome investment. Most communities in eastern Ontario struggle to attract people and investment – this portal will be a critical part of our resident attraction strategy for the whole region.”

Taso Christopher,  
Mayor, City of Belleville

In addition, in the past year eight new projects were launched under the ministry’s new Municipal Fund - Innovative Immigration Initiatives program. These innovative projects ranged from establishing local libraries as community hubs for immigration information and services, to developing sport, recreation, arts and volunteerism programming for immigrant children and youth – to encourage immigrant retention and community engagement.

Training Employment and Settlement Service Providers

Through Global Experience Ontario (GEO) – our resource centre for internationally trained immigrants – we have been training employment and settlement workers to guide immigrants through licensing processes for regulated professions, as well as to make referrals to programs, such as: bridge training, specialized language training, internships and mentoring.

Last year, close to 600 service providers in 80 community agencies benefited from our training sessions, and are now better equipped to provide up-to-date information about licensing to their clients.

Helping Temporary Foreign Workers

The Ministry of Labour took strong action last year to better protect the rights of workers. The Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act, 2014 received Royal Assent on November 20, 2014, and expands employment protections to cover all foreign employees who come to Ontario under an immigration or temporary foreign worker program.

In May 2015, the Employment Standards Act, 2000 was updated to ensure workers across the province better understand their rights in the workplace. The law now requires employers to provide employees with a copy of the province’s employment standards poster, and it must be provided in languages other than English or French if an employee requests a translated version.

In addition, employment standards officers conducted province-wide inspections in 2015 to target violations of minimum wage, overtime pay, meal breaks and other worker entitlements.
Office of the Fairness Commissioner

The Office of the Fairness Commissioner (OFC) was established as an agency of the Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade in 2007 to help ensure registration processes for regulated professions are transparent, objective, impartial and fair. For the past seven years, the OFC has been responsible for reviewing registration practices of regulatory bodies and helping regulators remove barriers that newcomers face when trying to get their credentials recognized.

In November 2014, the OFC held its first Transforming Fair Access Forum: Transforming Access, which brought together close to 150 stakeholders to discuss fair access issues ranging from increasing cross-sector collaboration to mobilizing international credentials in an increasingly global economy.

Two important targets identified in Ontario’s Immigration Strategy are increasing the number of immigrants licensed in their professions, and increasing the rates of employment for immigrants in fields that match their experience. In 2014, the OFC authored a policy paper using data compiled by the ministry to examine progress on achieving these targets.

This project studied employment match rates in 2006 and 2011 for immigrants educated in a regulated profession. Results suggest that fair access legislation and bridge training investments are having a positive impact on the experience of immigrants in regulated professions. Over a five-year period, the number of internationally educated license holders grew by 22.7 per cent in Ontario. Over the same period, the number of internationally educated professionals working in their profession increased by one per cent—an improvement roughly equivalent to 2,000 jobs. What we have learned is that progress in employment has not kept pace with progress in licensing. These findings have helped inform ongoing work to engage employers on the benefits of tapping international talent, and to investigate alternative career supports for highly skilled immigrants.

3. Leveraging the Global Connections of our Diverse Communities

When newcomers arrive in Ontario, they bring with them both knowledge about, and connections to, the countries and economies they left behind. Our Immigration Strategy recognizes that this knowledge and these connections are a valuable resource for our province, and can be used to grow our own economy. This is yet another indication of how important it is that we integrate immigrants into our workforce, and into the life of this province.
Progress Made

Pre-Arrival Services

An important part of Ontario’s strategy for welcoming immigrants involves providing them with information and supports before they arrive in Ontario. Mentioned earlier, our Global Experience Ontario (GEO) program also delivers live webinars and personalized information and referral services – about licensing in non-health regulated professions and trades – to immigrants prior to their arrival.

Over the past year, GEO delivered webinars explaining licensing processes to over 450 internationally trained accountants, engineers, teachers, early childhood educators, social workers and tradespersons in close to 40 countries around the world.

Comments about GEO webinars from prospective immigrants:

- “As an individual planning to land in Canada soon, this webinar was great and it also shows that Ontario is so supportive of people like us who sincerely wish to make Ontario their new home.”
- “Thank you for the presentation. That cleared many of my doubts about getting a professional license. It will help me to proceed further without any doubts.”
In 2013, Ontario contracted KPMG LLP to conduct a third-party review of the process by which we recognize the qualifications of foreign-trained workers seeking to continue their careers here. A commitment of the Immigration Strategy, this review was in response to complaints that the process was not working as well as it should have – resulting in unnecessary obstacles and delays for newcomers seeking to enter the labour market.

KPMG completed the review and issued a report in 2015 that includes recommendations to remove barriers faced by the internationally trained in getting their credentials and experience recognized, and also to improve labour market outcomes for internationally trained individuals. The Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade is currently reviewing the report and is committed to acting on it. The ministry will be releasing a summary of the recommendations in early 2016.
Conclusion

Immigrants make up 30 per cent of Ontario’s labour force. Over the next quarter century, immigration will account for all of the increases in this province’s working-age population, and it is expected to be a major source of future labour force growth. Immigration is an economic imperative, and maximizing Ontario’s immigration programs is a big part of our government’s economic plan for this province. Building on Ontario’s first ever Immigration Strategy is of paramount importance.

The last year has seen some very positive developments across Ontario government ministries. The passage of the *Ontario Immigration Act, 2015*, as well as the work that was done through the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program, saw this province seizing control of its own immigration destiny in a way that has been a long time coming. And, the formation of the Group of Experts on Francophone Immigration recognizes the contributions that Francophones have made to this province, and supports our goal of reaching five per cent Francophone immigration.

Our province has been the dream destination of immigrants for as long as it has been a province. We can take pride in this, but we must not take it for granted. We have a strategy to make immigration work better for the people who want to come here, and for all Ontarians. We are moving in the right direction, and we are forging ahead.