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**Synergies of Language and Life**  
46th TESL Ontario Conference

**13<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL PANEL DISCUSSION**  
Building Thriving Communities  
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# 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Panel Discussion: Building Thriving Communities

*Renate Tilson, Executive Director, TESL Ontario (Moderator)*

*Yvonne Ferrer, Director of Program Management and Evaluation, Citizenship & Immigration Division, Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS)*

*Yves Saint-Germain, Director, Language Policy and Francophone Communities, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)*

## Overview

As immigration levels continue to rise, Canadian and provincial ministries continue to provide the supports that newcomers need to settle and become integrated into daily life in Canada, including language training.

IRCC is evaluating and enhancing programs to ensure they meet the needs of a diverse group of immigrants coming to Canada. In 2019, IRCC will put forth a call for proposal that will help set the priorities and development of programs for 2020 to 2023.

MCCSS is now home to the former Ministry for Citizenship and Immigration (MCI). Despite this major move, the Citizenship and Immigration Division continues to help newcomers settle in Ontario.

## Context

Speakers representing different government entities discussed how their programs are serving Canada's fast-growing immigrant population, as well as what they are evaluating and changing to improve these offerings and keep up with the community's needs.

## Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)

Yves Saint-Germain spoke about the continued success of language training for settlement program participants, as well as future program goals.

### Newcomer language skills are improving, especially with occupation-specific training.

IRCC conducts periodic evaluation of its programs, including the settlement program, to understand the effectiveness of the services provided. The 2017 survey, which evaluated services offered between 2011 and 2017, found an overall improvement in newcomer language skills, especially for those receiving occupation-specific language training alongside general language education.

### IRCC Settlement Evaluation: Key Language Findings (2011 – 2016)

- Improved language skills
- Frequent use of official languages outside the home
- Higher impact on younger clients
- Higher impact on newcomers with higher human capital (education, economic status, previous official language knowledge)
- Highest impact on language improvement was with occupation-specific language training

*“The positive impact increases significantly in terms of language skills when newcomers take both employment-related language services and language training together.”*

*Yves Saint-Germain*

Two key recommendations came out of the settlement program evaluation.

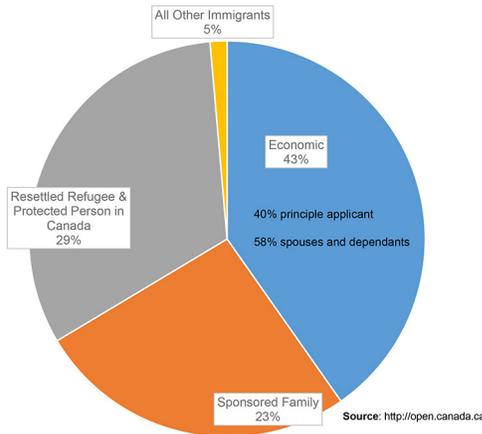
1. To continue looking into new and innovative approaches to language training.
2. To focus on occupation-specific training by optimizing the benefits of employment-specific language training. This includes looking into language training in the workplace.

### IRCC's program offerings need to support a diverse group of immigrants.

Because the types of immigrants coming into Canada are diverse, IRCC program offerings must also be flexible and diverse. Offerings must meet the needs of a wide range of newcomers arriving with a variety of different skills as well as barriers to learning and becoming part of the larger community.

In 2017-2018, 43% of the 272,600 landed immigrants were classified as economic immigrants, 29% were Refugees and Protected Persons, and 23% were from the Sponsored class. Comprising 11% of total services offered, the language program is nearly evenly distributed across economic (32%), resettled refugees and protected persons in Canada (36%), and sponsored family (31%).

2017-2018: Immigration Category of Landed Immigrants



IRCC's programs need to remain flexible to handle the increasing number of immigrants the Canadian government is expecting to welcome into the country over the next several years. In 2018, the government expects to add between 290,000 and 330,000 new permanent residents; by 2020, this number is expected to range between 310,000 and 360,000.

### IRCC works with partners and stakeholders to ensure complementary programming.

IRCC works closely with external partners and stakeholders to help shape program directions and ensure complementary programming. Mr. Saint-Germain shared information about two of these partnerships, although there are many different ways stakeholders and the provinces and territories collaborate.

- **The Federal/Provincial/Territories Language Forum** includes representatives from provinces and territories across Canada and is co-chaired by Mr. Saint-Germain and Yvonne Ferrer. The Forum focuses on e-learning, ESL/FSL literacy, and employment-related language training to help ensure newcomers can understand their proficiency in an official language and have the training available to develop their language ability.

- **The Newcomer Language Advisory Body (NLAB)** is a national forum with key stakeholders on issues that relate to settlement and language assessment and training for adult immigrants and newcomers. Government and key language settlement stakeholders work collaboratively to support the language learning needs of newcomers to Canada. NLAB shares information and evidence-based ideas, and gathers input on the development and implementation of settlement policies and programming.

### CFP 2019 will help set priorities and development of programs for 2020-2023.

One of IRCC's main focal points is in setting the processes and priorities for the anticipated call for proposals for 2019 (CFP 2019), which will set the direction of settlement programs from 2020 to 2023.

#### Potential Priorities for Settlement Language Program, 2020-2023

- Decrease waitlists in high demand areas where waitlists for programs are long; maximize the number of people who are in the classroom and not waiting for an opportunity to learn
- Improve access to learning programs in rural and remote areas
- Provide blended and online learning for students interested in accessing courses over the internet, including professional development training
- Continue support of the Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PBLA)
- Provide more resources for professional development and support
- Offer more employment-focused language training
- Add special needs programming for newcomers

*"The goal of CFP 2019 is to implement more high-quality innovative programming for our newcomers."*

*Yves Saint-Germain*

Feedback compiled from stakeholders and consultants, as well as from attendees to summits across Canada, will influence the CFP and priorities. Information gathered by IRCC includes views on language priorities and lessons learned from current projects.

### IRCC programs currently in focus aim to improve offerings.

In addition to CFP 2019, IRCC is also focusing on other programs that are driving improvements to existing offerings.

## Developments in Current IRCC Programs

| Project                                | Goal & Status  |
|--|--|
| Service Delivery Improvement (SDI)     | <p><b>Goal:</b> Invest strategically in projects that can lead to program improvements and greater efficiencies in the future.</p> <p><b>Status:</b> Signed 99 contribution agreements, 37 of which include language components, from over 700 ideas received. Agreements focus on seven key areas: youth, research and analysis, newcomer wellbeing, pay for performance, employment, language acquisition, and volunteers.</p>   |
| Official Languages Action Plan Funding | <p><b>Goal:</b> Increase the availability and access to official language training adapted to the needs of Francophone immigrants.</p> <p><b>Status:</b> In early stages; the 2018-2023 action plan funds progress toward a global Francophone education pathway, including learning for French-speaking immigrants who may not be proficient in Canadian French or an associated professional vocabulary.</p>   |
| PBLA                                   | <p><b>Goal:</b> Provide a portfolio-based approach to language assessment aligned to the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB).</p> <p><b>Status:</b> Introduced as a standard feature in programming in 2013, to date approximately 400 lead teachers have been trained and close to 2,500 instructors have been equipped to use PBLA at around 200 sites across Canada. Despite the growing use of PBLA across the country, IRCC recognizes more support and teacher resources are needed, including practice guidelines, online courses, and support forums on an e-learning portal.</p> |
| E-Learning Pathway                     | <p><b>Goal:</b> Create a national infrastructure to support e-learning offerings across the country in partnership with provinces, territories, and service provider organizations.</p> <p><b>Status:</b> Planning is underway, but has experienced some delays. IRCC continues to collaborate closely with other partners and stakeholders to ensure a successful project.</p>  |

## Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS)

Yvonne Ferrer discussed the realignment of the former Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI), along with three other ministries, into the new MCCSS, along with the review of existing services and opportunities for improvement.

### The Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration is now part of MCCSS.

After the June 2018 Ontario provincial elections, the MCI became part of the new MCCSS along with the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Children and Youth, and the Ministry of Women's Issues. Within the MCCSS, the Citizenship and Immigration Division is charged with many of the responsibilities MCI held in the past, including a dedicated focus on settlement and integration programs.

This move to a new, larger ministry with broader responsibilities opens up new opportunities for newcomer offerings, including a broad range of provincial services such as social assistance, children and youth services, and women's programming. The change also brings the opportunity to break down silos and address service navigation challenges.

*"[Being part of MCCSS] brings opportunities . . . to make programs more responsive to the needs and realities of newcomers across a much broader range of provincial services."*

*Yvonne Ferrer*

Work that was implemented prior to the election and prior to this change also remains a priority. This includes the focus on collaboration and partnership with the federal government to carry out commitments made as part of the Canada Ontario Immigration Agreement.

### MCCSS is reviewing all provincial-funded settlement and integration services.

In 2017, the Auditor General of Ontario conducted the Ontario's Value for Money Audit of Settlement and Integration Services for Newcomers. To respond to this audit, as well as a 2018 Ernst & Young line-by-line review of all provincial finances, MCCSS is embarking on a review of its provincial-funded settlement and integration services, including its language training program.

#### Key Findings and Recommendations from the Auditor General of Ontario

- Reduce duplication with the federal government
- Improve accountability and performance measures
- Raise awareness of newcomer services
- Strengthen partnerships with other parts of the province
- Measure and track learner success outcomes
- Review settlement and integration programs, including language training

### Modernization and federal-provincial collaboration are opportunities for improvement.

The Citizenship and Immigration Division is looking at two areas of opportunity to diversify language training delivery approaches to meet the needs of a diverse population of newcomers: program modernization and federal-provincial collaboration.

#### Focus Areas for Improvement

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Program modernization</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversify language training approaches to meet diverse needs</li> <li>• Increase focus on employment in the delivery of language training, including delivery of targeted occupation-specific language programs, to newcomers to transition to the labor market</li> <li>• Make better use of online tools, including e-learning</li> <li>• Offer blended delivery models</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Federal-provincial collaboration</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work with IRCC to better align federal and provincial services with priorities and client needs, reduce duplication, and improve settlement in Ontario</li> <li>• Follow the framework for bilateral collaboration to facilitate joint planning of complementary service provision and coordination between federal and provincial settlement services in Ontario as defined in the Canada-Ontario Settlement and Integration Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2017</li> </ul> |

Many of the program modernization objectives overlap with IRCC plans discussed by Mr. Saint-Germain and will need to be coordinated as part of the federal-provincial collaboration objectives. One of the first initiatives the federal and provincial governments are working on is service mapping to understand where their services are complementary, where there are gaps that need to be addressed, and where there is overlap.

### The language training program offers education and assessment for ESL/FSL learners.

Ms. Ferrer provided an update on the language training program, which offers education and assessment for both ESL and French as a Second Language (FSL) learners. The update was based on the 2016-2017 school year.

- Over 65,000 learners accessed more than 4,400 adult non-credit ESL/FSL courses at more than 300 locations across Ontario delivered by 36 school boards (33 English and 3 French).
- Approximately 70,000 newcomers had their English and French language skills assessed by 15 Coordinated Language Assessment and Referral Systems (CLARS) centers.
- MCCSS is currently funding 30 language training projects to support the delivery of ESL/FSL and pilot innovation models, including e-learning, PBLA, and best practices programs.

CLB progression showed that 55.3% of learners who attend more than 200 hours of training progressed at least one level during the school year.

### Discussion

After the presentation, the audience raised several key areas of discussion, which were addressed by Mr. Saint-Germain and Ms. Ferrer.

- **Instructors identified that assessing language acquisition accurately using PLBA remains a challenge for some.** IRCC continues to gather feedback and produce materials to ensure that instructors and administrators have the tools and resources to support delivery of PBLA. Mr. Saint-Germain indicated that PBLA is a priority for the 2019 Call For Proposals and there will be targeted funding to support administrators and instructors.
- **Newcomers expect their language classes will connect them to employment.** This means more targeted training, which requires building more partnerships. IRCC is evaluating the current types of language training in the workplace, and how it can make these programs more efficient.
- **Language learners want accelerated training.** Both Mr. Saint-Germain and Ms. Ferrer want to make language training as fast as possible but in a way that allows learners to reach assessment goals. There are some learners who drop out today because they are not learning fast enough or because there are other needs that force them out of the classroom, and this needs to be tracked to improve offerings.

## Biographies

### Yves Saint-Germain

Director, Language Policy and Francophone Communities, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)

Mr. Saint-Germain is the Director, Language Policy and Francophone Communities, in the Settlement and Integration Policy Branch of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). He is responsible for establishing directions for IRCC's Settlement Program in the areas of language policy and leading IRCC's contributions to the Action Plan for Official Languages 2013 – 2018, and the newly created Francophone Immigration Policy Hub. His key priorities currently include implementation of the Pan-Canadian Language Strategy to improve coordination in the design and delivery of language programming for adult immigrants across Canada, consolidating a Francophone integration pathway to ensure that French Speaking Immigrants receive high-quality services along the entire immigration continuum, and developing a Francophone immigration strategy and Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Francophone Immigration Action Plan to help the Department increase the number of French-speaking immigrants coming to Canada. Yves holds an M.A. in Political Science from Laval University and a B.A. from the University of Ottawa.

### Yvonne Ferrer

Director of Program Management and Evaluation, Citizenship & Immigration Division, Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS)

Throughout her professional career, Yvonne has held a number of managerial roles within the Ontario Government, the broader public sector and the philanthropic community. Yvonne is responsible for establishing directions for the design, development and implementation of immigration and citizenship programs, including language training, bridge training and settlement programs. Yvonne also holds responsibility for the development and delivery of Refugee Resettlement and Integration Programs. Yvonne joined the Ontario Public Service in 2006 and has held managerial positions at Ministry of the Attorney General, in addition to MCI. Before joining the OPS, Yvonne worked at the municipal level leading planning and development work related to housing and spent ten years at the Ontario Trillium Foundation managing programs and initiatives that addressed priorities in the environmental, social and arts and culture sectors. Yvonne has a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of Toronto and a Master of Public Administration from Queen's University.



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