

Presentation Overview

- Ontario's Newcomer Services Overview
- Provincial / Federal Collaboration
- COVID – 19 Pandemic
 - Impact on Newcomers
 - Impact on Language Training Services
 - Provincial Response
- Looking Ahead: Considerations for Recovery

Ontario: Serving Newcomers

Newcomer Settlement

Facilitates the effective integration of newcomers through the delivery of services that include:

- Orientation, settlement assistance, and service navigation
- Targeted services for newcomer youth, international students and newcomer women

~**80,000** clients annually

MCCSS

Adult Language Training

Helps adult newcomers gain official language skills needed for effective labour market and community integration through the delivery of:

- English/French as a Second Language (ESL/FSL) courses, from beginner to advanced levels
- Language assessments and referrals to place clients in courses that meet their needs

~**70,000** learners annually

Bridge Training Program

Helps internationally trained individuals (ITIs) obtain commensurate employment through programs that:

- Offer training to obtain licensure or certification to practice in a regulated occupation
- Help ITIs get a job in the field in which they were trained
- Promote systemic change

~ **5,000** participants annually

MLTSD

Bilateral Collaboration



- **Memorandum of Understanding on Settlement and Integration** commits Canada and Ontario to work together to improve the delivery and coordination of newcomer services to maximize resources, reduce duplication and improve newcomer outcomes.
- MCCSS and IRCC have been working on a number of joint approaches to facilitate service coordination and planning of language training services:
 - **Joint funding** of 15 Coordinated **Language Assessment** and Referral System (CLARS) agencies
 - **Protocol for referral** of Permanent Residents to federal language training courses on a priority basis
 - **Mapping of federal and provincial services** with focus on language training providers, and course level details to facilitate co-planning
 - **Onyx and Avenue**: Discussion of coordination of Onyx and Avenue offerings

COVID-19 Impacts on Newcomers

Economic Impacts:



- Immigrants have been disproportionately impacted by **COVID-related job losses** – both temporary and potentially permanent
- **Immigrant job recovery has also lagged**
- **Women** have suffered **heavier job losses** and heavier burden at home
- Newcomer and racialized workers more likely to work in jobs and industries that do not allow for remote work, and that place them at **higher risk of contracting coronavirus**.

Health Impacts:



- Immigrants, refugees and other newcomers, at just over 25% of the population, made up **43.5% of all COVID-19 cases in Ontario** as of mid-June 2020.
- **Women's health is more severely impacted.** The group with the largest number of COVID diagnoses in Canada is women aged 20 to 29.
- Service providers report that newcomers have expressed **increased fear, stress and loneliness** during the pandemic.

COVID-19 Impacts on Language Training

The pandemic and related public health measures required school boards, learners and government to pivot swiftly from primarily in-person learning environment to a virtual online approach.

ESL/FSL in the Pandemic Period



Until the new school year, most **classes were virtual**.

- Instructors initially taught from home with some online technology support (where possible)
- **Multiple / adaptive models** used to reach learners with varying access and skills with technology – phone/text, Facebook, Google classroom, ESL Library, Zoom, Padlet etc.



With re-opening of schools:

- Many instructors were back in schools with **expanded supports**
- Return to in-person classes for some learners with lower language and digital skills. Some learners in blended in-person/online cohorts.
- Many higher-level language learners remain online
- **Expanded access to online platforms / curriculum** (as of Sept): Onyx

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

Learners

- Digital literacy and access to computers and/or internet
- Learners with low level language / digital skills don't succeed as well online
- Additional commitments at home
- Learning success is often slower online than in-person classes

Language Training System

- Language assessment numbers down dramatically
- Assessment challenges, especially written assessments
- Instructors initially with limited online teaching capabilities
- Need for multi-pronged instructional approaches

Opportunities

- Move online has expanded instructor and learner digital options and training
- Online learning is not a replacement for in-person learning but can provide some flexibility to both learners and instructors
- Online learning removes geographic barriers to classes
- Employment related language training offerings have increased



Ontario's Response during the Pandemic



Flexibility to adapt service delivery to meet changing needs and respond to public health requirements

Service providers and school boards notified that:



- They have flexibility to move funds between budget lines **to meet COVID related needs**
- **Cap on administration costs removed**
- There is flexibility to use funds, within budgets, to purchase needed **technology** for instructors OR for loaning to learners
- As of September 2020, the option to use the **Onyx Learning Management System (LMS)** for some online classes with potential for expansion.
- Funding confirmed at same levels for new school year



- **Close monitoring** of the situation to ensure we have real time data **to be able to re-adjust as needed** in the face of the changing pandemic needs.

Looking Ahead: Considerations for Recovery

COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on immigrants and has exacerbated inequities that existed pre-pandemic.

- **Newcomers represent one third of Ontario's labour force** and play a critical role in meeting labour market needs and boosting the economy.
- There are **critical linkages between language proficiency and newcomers labour market success.**
- **Targeted employment and skills training programs** help newcomers succeed in getting and keeping jobs.
- **Newcomer women will need additional support**, including accessible and affordable childcare, to benefit from training and employment opportunities.
- **Reviews** of the Adult Language Training and Newcomer Settlement Program identified opportunities to **enhance service delivery and improve client outcomes.**
- A **key recommendation** is to modernize the newcomer settlement and language training services to have an **increased focus on employment needs and outcomes.**
- The pandemic situation makes the need and opportunities for improved program delivery and client outcomes with a focus on employment outcomes even more pressing.