



Language Learning: A Focus On Success

39th Annual TESL Ontario Conference

A CONFERENCE FOR TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

SIXTH ANNUAL PANEL DISCUSSION
Building Pathways to Learner Success
October 28, 2011

Panel Discussion: Building Pathways to Learner Success

- Panel: **Renate Tilson (Moderator)**, Executive Director, TESL Ontario (Teachers of English as a Second Language)
Harry Bezruchko, Senior Manager, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
Catherine Finlay, Director of Immigration Programs, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration
Richard Lecours, Acting Director of Settlement Programs, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ontario Region
Pauline McNaughton, Manager, Adult Education Policy Unit, Ontario Ministry of Education

Overview

Several government entities fund and administer language training and employment services programs in Ontario. Their programs differ, and so do the population groups they serve. But they share a common client: immigrants to Ontario. They also share a common objective: helping newcomers to integrate successfully into Canadian life. And they share a common vision of what people who arrive in Ontario lacking English or French proficiency should encounter as they seek the services they need to develop their potential. Newcomers deserve a clearly visible and accessible pathway to success.

To that end, three provincial ministries and the federal CIC are collaborating to integrate their various programs and services, adopt common systems and frameworks, share resources and tools, standardize assessments, streamline processes, and above all create a seamless experience as learners move among different government programs. They are partnering to remove barriers and build pathways to learner success.

Context

The panelists explained how their government organizations help Ontarian immigrants integrate into Canadian life via delivery of language training and employment services. They explained how their programs serve to build pathways for learners. They focused on programming initiatives and resources that hold particular relevance for ESL teachers as they seek to guide newcomers on the pathways to success.

Key Takeaways - Ontario CIC

Richard Lecours provided an overview of immigration trends, explained CIC's mission and settlement policies, and described its language and skills development programs.

- Immigration to Ontario has been declining, but the province still receives the highest proportion of Canada's newcomers.**

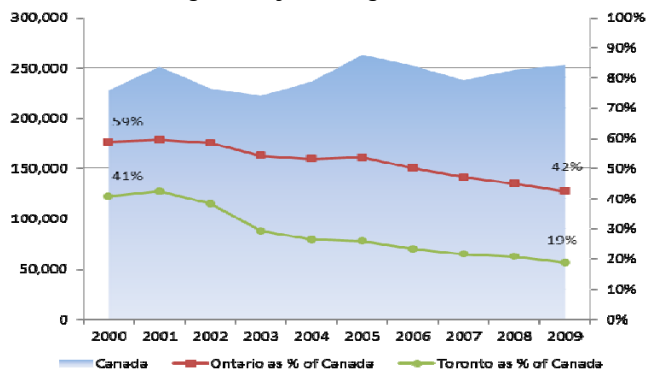
This year's conference theme, "Building Pathways to Learner Success," describes precisely what Mr. Lecours' settlement-focused team at the Ontario region's CIC is all about. Specifically, they develop the tools, support, and guidance that help newcomers succeed socially and economically.

The number of immigrants to Canada has been stable over the past decade, at around 250,000 per year. Canada

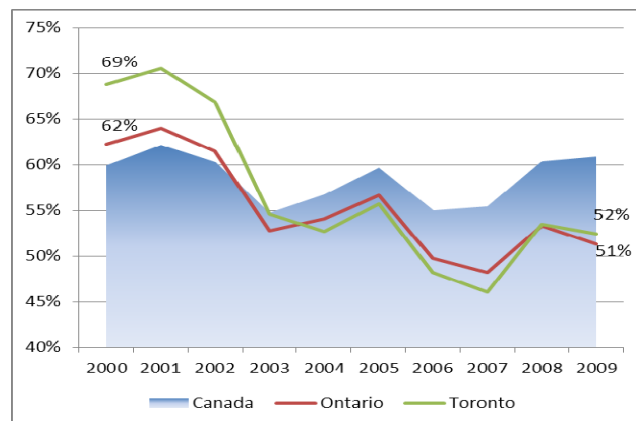
classifies immigrants into three categories: "Economic," "Family," and "Refugees." Nationally, about 60% of immigrants come to Canada for economic reasons and about 40% for non-economic reasons, such as joining family or fleeing native lands.

Ontario receives the highest proportion of immigrants of any province or territory, although the proportion of Canada's total immigrants that the province and city receive have steadily decreased over the past decade (see graph). Also declining has been the region's proportion of economic immigrants, which has dropped to nearly 50% from nearly 70% over the past ten years (see graph). However, immigration rates to Ontario and Toronto remain high.

Number of Immigrants by Landing Year



Percentage of Economic Immigrants by Landing Year



Toronto is one of the world's most ethno-culturally diverse cities. As of 2006, nearly half of its 2.5 million residents were born outside of Canada, and 11% were newcomers, having lived in Canada for less than five years.

- **CIC-Ontario's settlement programs target the same goal as ESL teachers: helping newcomers realize their potential.**

The Ontario CIC's Strategic Plan says that its settlement programs seek to ensure that "newcomers and citizens participate to their full potential in fostering an integrated society," i.e., a socially cohesive society with "enduring bonds" between all of its communities. One objective is that "Newcomers have the language skills needed to function in Canada."

That objective for CIC Ontario's settlement programs is exactly what happens in the language learning classrooms every day. "You're doing what we're looking for," said Mr. Lecours, "and we really appreciate that."

Since 2008, CIC Ontario's settlement program has adopted a "modernized approach" to implementing its goals, which involves metrics, never forgetting why people are in settlement programs, and flexibility regarding how goals are best achieved. Traditional classrooms and processes don't necessarily have to be followed. The shift to this modernized approach has meant moving from a suite of programs to a single program using a suite of services that can be combined to achieve desired outcomes.

"We're all working for newcomer success. How we get there is really up to you and the newcomers."
— Richard Lecours

- **CIC Ontario's settlement programs include language and career development tools, classes, and support services.**

CIC Ontario's settlement programs' language learning activities fall into the following categories:

- *Language Assessment and Referral.* CIC is moving forward in "high gear now" with its Coordinated Language Assessment and Referral System (CLARS). The launch of CLARS will mean that for every student seeking any kind of language training, a needs assessment will be the first step on the learning pathway. CLARS will function as one entry point to all available services, pointing students to the best pathways for their needs.
- *Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC, and the French version, CLIC).* A total of 116 agencies offer 1,630 LINC/CLIC classes and serve 49,500 adult learners, facilitating their social, cultural, economic, and political integration into Canadian life. These classes are for literacy levels up to Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) 8.
- *Enhanced Language Training (ELT).* Thirty-five agencies deliver labor-market-level language training for adult immigrants at CLB levels 7–10. The 320 classes, serving 4,000 learners, provide job-specific language training, mentoring, work placement, and other job-related assistance.

- *Occupation-Specific Language Training (OSLT/FLAP).* Sixty-five classes are held at 13 colleges.

"What [CLARS] means is that the assessment phase will be the first step in the language training pathway for all learners in Ontario. . . . For either ESL or LINC, it will be one door."
— Richard Lecours

On the national level, CIC has been doing intensive work to build a framework that will renew the CLB /NCLC system with standards, benchmarks, and organizing principles for all federal and provincial programs. Consultations with experts in the field are guiding this process. The goal is to renew the tools that support teachers and strengthen their professional development, which should lead to better learning outcomes.

Other tools and initiatives under development include:

- *The Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA),* which will standardize LINC performance measurement and help teachers see the evolution of students' learning.
- *Professional development for ESL teachers.* These activities and tools include: 1) a peer-coaching, classroom-based development framework; 2) accredited post-TESL certificate training for LINC and ESL instructors desiring specialized training to meet evolving learner needs; and 3) resources and training to facilitate delivery of online and computer-assisted language learning, in and out of the classroom (www.learnIT2teach.ca).
- *Resources for OSLT instructors.* Knowledge Exchange Network (KEN) is a web-based network facilitating the sharing of best practices among OSLT instructors (<http://kneet.senecac.on.ca/oslt>). The OSLT Assessment Scheme provides a way to measure learner outcomes that improves learning quality, consistency, and relevance.
- *Cultural learning programs for CLIC classes.* Web 2.0-based learning programs help students to learn French as they learn about Canadian culture.
- *Online community of practice for language instructors.* CIC, in partnership with the provinces, is developing www.tutela.ca, a national online repository and community of practice for language instructors. The website facilitates access to resources, reduces duplication of efforts, and fosters collaboration.
- *CLB Milestones Test.* This standardized achievement test will provide newcomers with a language credential to show employers and professional trade associations.

Key Takeaways - Ontario MCI

Ms. Finlay described the objectives and newcomer support programs of the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI).

- **To remove the language barriers for immigrants, tuition-free adult non-credit language training programs are funded by MCI and delivered by school boards.**

In the past five years, 573,000 immigrants have come to Ontario. More than half of those aged 26–64 arrived with a university degree, and 72% indicated language ability in at least one of Canada's two official languages.

Even though immigrants are more likely to have a university degree than Canadian-born residents, many have difficulty finding work in their fields. Only 24% of internationally trained professionals in Canada work in their professions compared with 62% of Canada-trained professionals. The barriers they face include non-recognition of their foreign credentials and language proficiency. These challenges make it difficult for immigrants to integrate economically and socially into Canadian life. MCI and the province funds a range of programs that help address all factors impacting newcomer success.

“Improved language ability can open doors to more governmental services, reduce isolation and support integration in the community, and improve job prospects.”

— Catherine Finlay

MCI's non-credit courses in English and French as a Second Language for immigrants are offered as part of the Ontario School Boards' adult education programs. MCI's Adult Non-Credit ESL and FSL Training Program is Ontario's largest language training program.

Ontario MCI also is funding 116 bridge training programs that include a language component. Besides academic and technical training, these programs offer workplace cultural and communication training as well as OSLT, both for and in the workplace.

Some of the classes are quite innovative, customized to learner interests by school boards and teachers. For example, one language training course for Tibetan farmers in Toronto's Parkdale neighborhood uses community gardening to teach ESL. Another teaches ESL through sewing classes.

MCI's ESL and FSL classes are well received by learners. Of those surveyed in 2010, 94% called their classes “helpful” or “very helpful” in reaching their goals, and 78% are taking no other language classes. The top three reasons for participating were to gain help in daily life (35%), get a job (22%), and prepare for college (13%).

- **Improving coordination between the programs of different governmental arms permits more effective service to learners.**

Enhancements are underway to make MCI Ontario's language training program more learner-focused, addressing the full spectrum of training needs, as well as to make it more broadly accessible, accountable, aligned with provin-

cial objectives, and coordinated with federal training programs.

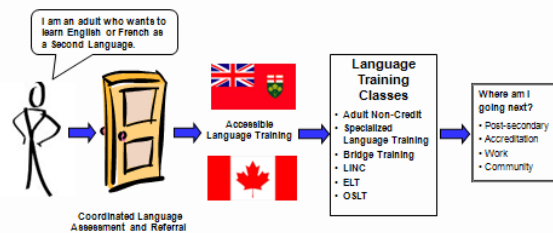
Improved coordination of MCI's ESL and FSL program with federal language training programs will be achieved through adoption of common standards and coordinated tools and resources. These include the CLARS and PBLA assessment tools in pilot phases, which Mr. Lecours discussed, and HARTS, a single-learner and course database for both provincial and federal language programs.

MCI is also partnering with Ontario's Ministry of Education (MEDU) and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) to improve the coordination of all three ministries' adult education programs and services. Closer inter-ministry coordination will help service providers meet learners' needs more effectively. Students' pathways to learning will be clarified, including paths that weave among the three ministries' programs.

“The three ministries are working collaboratively to improve learner pathways between our programs to ensure learners who need to transition between programs find themselves in the right classes with the right level of skills they need to succeed.”

— Catherine Finlay

Ontario's vision for adult language training



Key Takeaways - Ontario MEDU

Pauline McNaughton discussed how the Ministry of Education (MEDU) has partnered with MCI and MTCU to facilitate student progress and described MEDU programs with relevance for newcomers.

- **An inter-ministry working group is piloting programs focused on clearing pathways to learner success.**

The Adult Education Policy Unit of the Ontario MEDU's Student Success Initiative has a mandate to take a broader view of the adult education programs than it historically has. The focus is on partnering with MCI and MTCU, because the “grand vision” is the same for all three funders of adult education programs. Ontario's vision, as Ms. Finlay described, is to facilitate learners' progress along the pathway from language training to accreditation to work to community.

“It’s clear to us in all three ministries that immigrants are in all of our programs. They’re stakeholders for all of us. Their pathway is a critical focus.”

— Pauline McNaughton

Learners’ pathways often involve movement among the three ministries’ programs, so the ministries are working together to remove barriers to smooth transitions. To this end, a working group with representatives from all three ministries is piloting experimental projects to:

- *Determine what tools, processes, and protocols to improve local-level pathways for newcomers might be scaled up or applied to other programs.*
- *Develop resources to award students credit for prior learning in their first languages.*
- *Encourage school boards to better utilize their data for research that will help them improve delivery of their continuing education credit programs.* The goal is to better understand students’ needs and how best to meet them. Some of the research is focused specifically on immigrant learners in adult credit programs and how they might be better served.

“There’s lots and lots more to find out about how well we’re serving the immigrant learner and why they’re coming.”

— Pauline McNaughton

A couple of existing MEDU initiatives that ESL instructors should know about are:

- *Online resources.* The Ministry’s EduGains website (www.edugains.ca) offers a wealth of constantly updated resources and information to help teachers meet the needs of English language learners (ELLs). A soon-to-be-published tool is Steps for English Proficiency (STEP) 2011, a framework for assessing and monitoring the language acquisition of children ELLs.
- *Cooperative education.* The Expanded Cooperative Education program helps teens—who enroll as adults—earn credits toward secondary school diplomas as they gain workplace experience. The popular program affords excellent opportunities for ELLs to hone their language skills. Enrollment has risen 15% since 2006.

Key Takeaways - Ontario MTCU

Harry Bezruchko explained the role that the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities’ (MTCU) Employment Ontario plays to enable learners’ success.

▪ Employment Ontario offers integrated training and employment services for the job-seeking immigrant.

Employment Ontario (www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/employmentontario) began in 2007 with the federal government’s transfer of some job-training programs to the province’s control. The federal programs were combined with the province’s own employment-related programs into Employment Ontario. Most of the programs are run by third-party service providers such as colleges and community organizations under contract with MTCU. The Ministry spends more than \$1.6 billion per year on Employment Ontario programs.

Anyone focused on helping ESL students gain entry to the Ontario job market should be aware that Employment Ontario offers a hotline, a job bank, and a comprehensive, user-friendly, integrated job-training and employment delivery network. All Employment Ontario programs and services are available by visiting any of its four regional offices. The first step when one walks in is a needs assessment. Services are tailored to meet the individual’s needs and provided without onerous red tape. Programs are regionally customized, regularly evaluated based on client outcomes, and continuously improved.

“This is our promise: The highest quality of service and support to meet your career needs and provide opportunities to improve your skills. . . . No matter which Employment Ontario office you walk into, you will get the help you need.”

— Harry Bezruchko

Employment Ontario’s cornerstone projects include:

- *Second Career* provides the unemployed with retraining opportunities, to qualify people to enter new fields where labor is in high demand.
- *Apprenticeship system.* Ontario Employment offers the largest apprenticeship learning system in Canada, serving more than 150 skilled occupations in four sectors: construction, industrial/manufacturing, motive power, and service. The College of Trades has been developed as a new way to promote, market, and advocate on behalf of the trades.
- *Literacy and Basic Skills* helps adult learners improve literacy and numeracy skills. Services include referrals, assessment, training plans, training, and evaluation follow-up to make sure that the learning was successful. A new program is the Ontario Literacy Curriculum Framework, with five pathways demonstrating learner skill attainment.

Biographies

Harry Bezruchko

Senior Manager, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

Harry Bezruchko has been a Provincial employee for 5 years. Currently, Harry is a senior manager at Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, responsible for policy regarding Employment Ontario programs, including Literacy, skills training and Apprenticeship. Prior to this position Harry was involved in Finance and resource management at the same Ministry. Before coming to the Province, Harry worked for the Federal Government (Service Canada) for 20 in a variety of positions, from Finance to Policy. His last job, before coming to the Province was as a senior manager responsible for employment programs for persons on Employment Insurance, Youth, Aborigines and Persons with Person with Disabilities.

Catherine Finlay

Director of Immigration Programs, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration

Catherine Finlay is currently the Director of Immigration Programs at the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. Her responsibilities include Opportunities Ontario: Provincial Nominee Program - a provincial immigration selection program, Global Experience Ontario serving internationally trained individuals, Adult Non-Credit English and French as a Second Language training services, and newcomer settlement and bridge to work programs.

Catherine has had an extensive and diverse career in the Ministries of Health, Consumer and Business Services, Government Services, and Citizenship and Immigration in operations, policy, strategic planning, corporate support and finance, and communications. A senior executive with a strong customer service orientation, Catherine has, throughout her career, taken the lead in transforming business and services to make it easier for individuals, business and stakeholders to interact with government. A service excellence highlight was the introduction of the first ever government money-back guarantee for new online certificate services. Catherine and her team are currently working with service partners on the redesign of the Adult Non-credit ESL/FSL language training program to ensure it is more learner-focused and results oriented.

Richard Lecours

Acting Director of Settlement Programs, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ontario Region

Richard Lecours is currently acting Director of Settlement Programs in Ontario Region for CIC. He has been involved with settlement issues with CIC for the last 15 years, working with community partners and managing those programs (including LINC) that help newcomers in many parts of Ontario, which has included London, Kitchener-Waterloo, York Region, Simcoe County, Durham Region and the North of Toronto as well as their environs. He has also had the opportunity to help overseas at Canadian High Commissions in New Delhi and Hong Kong. He is particularly honoured to have been able to play a part in the recent establishment of 7 newcomer Welcome Centres in York and Durham Regions. Richard has previously worked as an environmental planner for the province as well as served as executive director or as Board President for various social service organizations, including a Toronto Community Health Centre, a non-profit Daycare and a Crisis Helpline.

Pauline McNaughton

Manager, Adult Education Policy Unit, Ontario Ministry of Education

Pauline McNaughton is the Manager of the Adult Education Policy Unit of the Ontario Ministry of Education. Previously she was the Executive Director at the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks supporting and promoting the use of national standards in education, training, community, and workplace settings.

Pauline received Master of Arts in English literature from York University.



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