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40th Annual TESL Ontario Conference

A CONFERENCE FOR TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

SEVENTH ANNUAL PANEL DISCUSSION
The Evolving Landscape of Language Training in Ontario
November 9, 2012

Seventh Annual Panel Discussion: The Evolving Landscape of Language Training in Ontario

- Panel: **Richard Franz**, *Director, Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategic Policy Branch, Ontario Ministry of Education*
Jean-Guy Fr chet, *Manager, Strategic Policy & Programs, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities*
Mourad Mardikian, *Manager, Language Training Unit, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration*
Yves Saint-Germain, *Director, Information, Language and Community Policy Division, Integration Branch, Citizenship and Immigration*
- Moderator: **Renate Tilson**, *Executive Director, TESL Ontario*

Overview

The landscape of English and French as a Second Language (ESL and FSL) training in Ontario is changing as the four government entities that fund ESL and FSL programs in the province implement new policies and initiatives. Many of the changes reflect a focus on continual improvement of language services delivery through implementing common standards, leveraging data, and forging collaborative partnerships. But other federal-level changes, to citizenship and immigration requirements, hold the potential to shift trends in ESL/FSL courses' enrollment levels in ways not yet known.

A priority for all four government entities involved in ESL/FSL is a focus on the individual learner. These entities are working together to coordinate programs and provide individual learners with clear pathways to achieve their goals in the most expedient ways.

Context

The panelists, representing the four government entities that fund ESL/FSL language courses in Ontario, explained new approaches, policies, and program initiatives with bearing on ESL/FSL language training and learners. This summary highlights the key points from each government entity: CIC, Ontario MCI, Ontario MEDU, and Ontario MTCU.

CIC

Yves Saint-Germain explained how changes that his department, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), has made in policy and programs, performance measurement, and e-learning may affect language training.

- CIC immigration and citizenship policy changes hold the potential to impact ESL/FSL programs.**

Canada's newcomer selection policies affect the need for and nature of ESL language training provided to newcomers once they arrived. In theory, Canada could select newcomers so that there would be no need for language training; immigrants would arrive with the skills required. Effective 2013, CIC is implementing changes to its selection process designed to shorten how long it takes immigrants to secure jobs and contribute economically, once in Canada. The Department is also making changes with regard to how people applying for citizenship demonstrate their proficiency in at least one of Canada's two official languages (OLs), English or French.

Prospective Immigrants Will Face New Language Proficiency Requirements in 2013

CIC Program	Changes
<p>Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP):</p> <p>Designed to select people for immigration with the ability to quickly enter into the labor market, FSWP assesses applicants' essential and transferable skills (OL ability, education, and work experience).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OL proficiency required will rise from 24 to 28 points on the FSWP point system, out of a possible total of 100, with maximum points for fluency in one OL increased from 16 to 24 and additional 4 points possible for proficiency in a second OL. Applicants would be required to have a minimum CLB/NCLC 7 to qualify for the program.
<p>Canadian Experienced Class (CEC) Program:</p> <p>Allows applicants who have studied or worked in a skilled occupation in Canada and have OL proficiency to remain in Canada permanently.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants in managerial and professional occupations will be required to have CLB/NCLC 7 and those in technical occupations to obtain a CLB/NCLC 5 in each of the four assessed skills.

The full effects of these changes on ESL programs are unknown. Possible effects include more students seeking proficiency credentials, increased pressure by students to be passed, and increased pressure on teachers to teach citizenship concepts. CIC projects that the new requirements may result in changes to enrollment (levels at which newcomers access language training in the country).

However, in the session's Q&A, educators in the audience expressed concern about the exact opposite: Language programs' experiencing an "onslaught" of enrollees seeking language proficiency credentials to submit to CIC. One called the issue "the elephant in the room." Teachers are concerned not just about workloads and the new requirements' effects on their programs, but also about

the effects on their clients, the students. If not enrolled in a program that provides evidence of their language proficiency, students may have to pay \$150 for exams proving their proficiency. Some teachers have been feeling besieged by questions they can't answer.

Immigration and citizenship representatives from both the federal CIC (Mr. Saint-Germain) and provincial MCI (Mr. Mardikian) have been working together to anticipate issues and smooth the transitions. They responded to educators' concerns with reassurances:

- CLB/NCLC standards have not been raised; just the requirement for evidence of proficiency is new.
- The evidence may be demonstrated in multiple ways (e.g., a secondary school diploma in English).
- The hope and expectation is that ESL educators will experience few changes in enrollment trends and a seamless transition.
- The CIC and MCI will be closely monitoring the effects of new requirements on ESL programs, and will make program or policy adjustments as warranted. Their minds are open to changing policies, but they first want to wait and see what effects will be.

"At this point, we want to hold off on adding a new layer in our ESL program, and monitor to see what the changes will be."

— Mourad Mardikian

▪ **CIC has a gamut of initiatives affecting ESL/FSL.**

New CIC programs will enhance ESL/FSL training via innovations, more robust measurement, e-learning, and communities of practice. Initiatives include:

Settlement Program Transition: Bringing Innovation to LINC

The federal government will be resuming management of federally funded settlement programs in certain provinces and working on new partnership models with all of them, Ontario included. In the language arena, a major objective is to bring recent innovations in ESL instruction into CIC's Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program. This will mean more teachers, bringing new perspectives and approaches to LINC, and new initiatives for sharing best practices and tools across Canada.

National Call for Program Delivery Proposals: Innovation and Partnership Encouraged

For the first time, CIC has issued a national call for program delivery proposals (versus its former regional process). For LINC, a priority is to provide lower-level language training to ensure that the maximum number of newcomers obtain citizenship. Innovative program developers are encouraged to partner across provinces.

New Newcomer Language Advisory Body: Giving Teachers a Voice

To better engage stakeholders, CIC is creating a new consultation body. The Newcomer Language advisory body will advise CIC on policy issues and provide a mechanism for improved collaboration between the settlement language training sector and the CIC. It will give teachers more of a voice within CIC.

New Canadian Language Benchmarks: Increased User Friendliness

Revised versions of the Canadian Language Benchmarks and *Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens* will include changes to increase the standards' user-friendliness, including increased navigability, clearer descriptions, and better practitioner guidelines.

New Language Certificates: The Credentials LINC Students Need for Citizenship

Certificates of CLB level completion will be available to all LINC students and will be accepted as a form of evidence of OL proficiency, newly required for Canadian citizenship.

CLB Milestones Test: Common Standards on Their Way

CIC has commissioned the development of a new standardized test (designed independently of language training programs) to measure and certify English language proficiency from CLB 3- to 9+. Various prototypes are still in development and pilot phases.

Importantly, having common standards will allow the effectiveness of different training models to be compared. Once ready, the Milestones Test will be used for CIC's routine evaluation of language training programs. In time, it might be used for demonstration of language ability when people apply for citizenship, work, or school. Thus, it could offer a good option for students who need language credentials without going through ESL education.

Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA): Innovation in the Classroom

PBLA is an innovative in-class language assessment protocol directly aligned to the CLB framework. It provides a standardized approach to measuring student advancement, and supports better learning results. Teachers and students collaboratively set language learning goals, compile examples of language proficiency and learning in a variety of contexts, analyze the data, and reflect on students' progress.

"PBLA is a real motivator for students and provides teachers with evidence of student progress."

— Yves Saint-Germain

Learn IT2Teach: Strong Start to eLearning

CIC realizes that ESL education needs to move quickly into eLearning. The LearnIT2teach provides LINC teachers with the technology tools they need to implement blended learning in their programs. The program has been successful in Ontario and is ready for national rollout.

Tutela.ca: Vibrant Community of Practice for Teachers

CIC has been supporting the development of www.tutela.ca, a national community of practice for ESL/FSL teachers. With 1,250 users (expected to grow to 7,000), this Web 2.0 environment offers:

- Discussion forums
- Free access to a library of more than 1,000 shareable resources (expected to grow to 10,000) including lesson plans, classroom materials, CLB-based curriculum guidelines, and reusable learning objects
- Job listings
- Networking with peers across Canada via videoconferencing, online forums, and events

A VIBRANT COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE



Ontario MCI

Mourad Mardikian shared the directions in which the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) is taking the province's ESL and FSL training program.

• Ontario MCI is focused on continuous improvement.

MCI's Adult Non-Credit English and French as a Second Language Training Program is Ontario's (and Canada's) largest language training program geared toward adult immigrants. Courses range from general language to occupation-specific courses. Funding goes to Ontario school boards' adult continuing education departments to set up programs in schools or other locations.

MCI works collaboratively with MEDU and MTCU to coordinate language training programs as well as to clarify learning pathways for learners transitioning between

programs funded by the three ministries. It is an important aim of MCI to help immigrants expedite attainment of their goals, and not to be a barrier to getting on the right path.

MCI's ESL and FSL language training is quite successful, measured by student satisfaction. The Ministry's 2011 survey of 8,000 learners showed that 94% feel the program is "helpful" or "very helpful" in achieving their goals.

"[A] very high percentage [94%] of immigrants tell us that the language training courses you're delivering to them are helpful or very helpful in achieving their goals."

— Mourad Mardikian

Other survey data include:

- *Motivations:* The top three reasons ESL and FSL learners took language training were to: 1) improve their English for daily life (39%); 2) get a job (22%); and 3) prepare for studying at a university or college (13%).
- *Education levels:* 41% of learners have completed post-secondary studies, 31% at a university; 76% have at least a high school education.
- *Employment statistics:* 27% of learners were employed (15% full-time, 12% part-time), 31% looking for a job.
- *Skills sought:* 64% of learners cited verbal communication as the most important skill to acquire.

Program Redesign Underway Will Increase Learner Focus and Accountability

Since 2009, MCI has been engaged in redesigning its ESL/FSL program to ensure that it:

- Is learner-focused and results-based
- Addresses the full spectrum of adult language training needs
- Aligns with provincial objectives for adult education
- Is coordinated with federal language training programs

Notably, the reforms won't impose new restrictions on how courses are run.

"[We don't want to dictate] how to run your courses. You could have a 30-hour course; you could have a 300-hour course. . . . Go ahead and run it, and we'll fund it."

— Mourad Mardikian

Working with TESL, MCI has introduced a minimum standard for program instructors. As of September 2012, all new ESL teachers are required to have a TESL certificate of accreditation. Those already employed by MCI-funded school boards prior to September 2012 can be exempt under certain conditions, but they are encouraged to earn accreditation nonetheless, through an MCI-subsidized Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process that is being developed.

New Initiatives Reflect New Standards, Innovation, and Collaboration

Other initiatives MCI is working on or planning reflect its desire to continually improve its delivery of language training services. These include:

- *Data efficiencies:* Implementation of electronic reporting for program data and financial information.
- *Academic standards:* Development of Ontario Curriculum Guidelines.
- *Innovation:* Program research and innovation projects:
 - Delivering new tools and resources
 - Providing additional PD/training for instructors and staff
 - Funding conferences
- *Workplace readiness:* Specialized occupation-specific language training projects, for and in the workplace.
- *Partnership and collaboration:* Coordination with federal language training programs:
 - Working with CIC on introduction of a Coordinated Language Assessment and Referral System (CLARS). CLARS will provide adult immigrants a single point of language assessment, referring them as appropriate into either provincial or federal programs.
 - Working with CIC on adoption of a common, shared learner and course database, History of Assessment Referral and Training System (HARTS).
 - Participating in the PBLA pilot.

Ontario MEDU

Richard Franz explained the Ministry of Education's (MEDU) adult education objectives and initiatives.

- **MEDU provides for-credit adult language training to help immigrants earn secondary school diplomas.**

MEDU has three overarching goals: 1) increase student achievement; 2) close gaps in student achievement; and 3) increase public confidence in public education. A report on MEDU's website, *Ontario Learns*, sets out more specifically what the Ministry is trying to do.

MEDU is concerned with ESL and FSL in two contexts: adult continuing education (it has a unit devoted to adult education) and K–12 education. Language training for both is aimed at helping people achieve Ontario secondary school diplomas so that they can move on to post-secondary studies or work.

K–12 teachers in Ontario schools have been effectively closing the gap between ESL learners and the rest of the population. ESL learners have an average 68% pass rate on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy test. That is an

improving trend, credited to excellent teaching and resources.

STEP is one of those resources: a framework for assessing and measuring English language learners' acquisition and literacy development across the Ontario curriculum. A list of resources related to ESL and FSL training in Ontario is available on the website www.edugains.ca.

In its adult unit, the Ministry is focused on the following ESL/FSL priorities:

- *Improving the coordination of adult education.* The Adult Education Policy Unit coordinates work across the three ministries (MEDU, MTCU, and MCI) to: 1) align policies and coordinate programs among the ministries; 2) help learners navigate the shortest, most effective pathways to their goals; and 3) help learners transition among the three ministries' programs.
- *Improving schools' adult and continuing education programs via data.* This is the third year of the School Improvement Plans and Research Projects initiative. It supports schools' use of data to improve programs and supports their development of SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely) goals.

"If there's been one big trend in education in the last decade, it certainly has been the use of data to drive improvement efforts."

— Richard Franz

- *Transitioning to adult credit programs from non-credit ESL/FSL training programs.* School boards' for-credit programs provide opportunities for adult immigrants with basic ESL/FSL skills to earn Ontario secondary school diplomas and/or complete courses required for post-secondary institutions and apprenticeship programs. PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition for Mature Students) testing provides the means for adult students to earn up to 26 of the 30 credits required for an Ontario secondary school diploma.

- *Providing expanded cooperative education.* Ontario's cooperative education program allows students to meet some of the curriculum expectations needed for an Ontario secondary school diploma from learning in the workplace.

Ontario MTCU

Jean-Guy Fréchette discussed changes in the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities' (MTCU) Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) program.

- **Literacy and basic skills training is integral to achieving MTCU's vision.**

MTCU's vision is to build Ontario's competitive advantage and quality of life by having the most highly educated and skilled people in the world. The Ministry spends \$93 million

a year on its LBS program, which contributes to this vision by delivering literacy and basic skills training to adult residents of Ontario. It develops learners' abilities to apply communication, numeracy, and digital skills to find, use, create, and think critically about information and ideas.

Two important changes to LBS were made in 2012:

- *Implementation of the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF)*. OALCF is a competency-based framework that supports the development of adult literacy programming and helps learners transition to their goals of work, further education and training, or independence. Specifically, OALCF improves learner outcomes by supporting LBS programming that is learner-centered, goal-directed, and linked to a broader system of services. (More on OALCF: www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/oalcf.)
- *Launch of the Service Delivery Network Development Fund (SDNDF)*. SDNDF is an investment by MTCU to develop the capacity of third-party service providers to deliver Employment Ontario programs including LBS.

MTCU's priorities for 2013–2014 include:

- *Facilitating seamless, effective learner transitions*. The focus will be on: 1) continually improving learner transitions between MTCU's Employment Ontario programs and the programs of MCI and MEDU; and 2) literacy services plans that reflect the input, objectives, and priorities of Employment Ontario programs and are responsive to emerging community needs.

- *Analyzing and improving LBS program performance* via: 1) collection and analysis of LBS performance measurement data and indicators; and 2) application of evidence-based results to improve the LBS service providers' performance.
- *Providing quality instruction to learners* through: 1) use of service providers' performance results to inform professional development needs; and 2) the provision of comparable and accountable online learning.

"It's a whole other reality up North [which is] something we're thinking about as we look at integrated service delivery models."

— Jean-Guy Fréchette

Biographies

Richard Franz

Director, Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategic Policy Branch, Ontario Ministry of Education

Richard Franz is the Director of the Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategic Policy Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Education. This branch is responsible for developing policies, programs and legislation to support the government's Student Success/Learning to 18 strategy. The work includes reviewing and updating the requirements for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma, guidance and career education and cooperative education. The branch, in consultation with external and internal stakeholders, develops policies, programs and resources for the Specialist High Skills Major programs, secondary school-college dual credits, and adult education.

Mr. Franz has been with the Ministry of Education for nine years. Previously he has held senior policy advisor positions at the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In each capacity, he has worked at the intersection of policy development and program implementation. Prior to working in government, he was a program developer for a non-profit housing corporation and the Executive Director of a community organization. Mr. Franz holds a Bachelors of Arts with distinction and a Masters of Education from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, Illinois.

Jean-Guy Fréchette

Manager, Strategic Policy & Programs, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

Jean-Guy Fréchette is the Senior Manager of the Program Development Unit of the Programs Branch within the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The Unit is responsible for overseeing the development of Employment Ontario programs, apprenticeship programs and a number of postsecondary education access and targeted initiatives programs.

Prior to this assignment he held a number of positions within both the ministries of Education and Training, Colleges and Universities. As manager of the Aboriginal Education Office, Jean-Guy led the successful development of the Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework following 18 months of community engagement. The initiative strengthened relationships between the ministry and First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities and created a new suite of programs to support Aboriginal peoples access, participate and succeed in postsecondary education and training opportunities.

Jean-Guy is originally from North Bay, Ontario and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Semiotics and a Masters of Education from the University of Toronto.

Mourad Mardikian

Manager, Language Training Unit, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration

Mourad Mardikian has been with the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's Language Training Unit almost since its inception

in May 2006 as the unit's first Team Lead and more recently as its Manager. He is responsible for the management of the Ministry's largest program—the Adult Non-Credit Language Training Program—which happens to also be Ontario's and Canada's largest language training program geared to adult immigrants. With input from the Ministry of Education, he helped develop and implement the internal processes to ensure the smooth transition of the Adult Non-Credit Language Training program to MCI. He works closely with colleagues at the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities on adult education initiatives related to language training. More recently, he has been working very closely with the federal government (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) on the development and implementation of the Coordinated Language Assessment and Referral System (called CLARS) as the co-chair of the CLARS Advisory Committee and was previously the Co-Chair of the Language Training Working Group set up through the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement. Prior to joining the Ontario Public Service, he worked in the private sector in management consulting and business consulting focusing on developing self-employment training programs geared to both adult and youth entrepreneurs.

Yves Saint-Germain

Director, Information, Language and Community Policy Division, Integration Branch, Citizenship and Immigration

Yves Saint-Germain joined the department of Citizenship and Immigration in 2006, occupying various functions including the development of an accountability approach for settlement programs and the management of performance measurement aspects (e.g., iCAMS). He was appointed Director of Information, Language and Community Policy, Integration Branch, Citizenship and Immigration Canada in August 2007. He is responsible for:

- Information and Orientation program policy and setting national directions including information provision programs starting overseas (Going to Canada Immigration Portal, Canadian Orientation Abroad–IOM, Active Engagement Immigration Project–Success), information services in airports such as CANN in Vancouver, domestic orientation sessions and curriculum, and content development for flagship publications such as CIC Welcome to Canada.
- Language learning program policy including setting directions for Language Instruction for newcomers to Canada (LINC) and working with provinces and territories on languages issues across the immigration continuum as the Chair of the FPT Language Forum and member of the FPT Settlement Working Group.
- Community Policy including enhancing community connections through a societal and immigrant engagement strategy, mentorship activities (former HOST program, Welcoming Communities Initiative).
- Leading the implementation of the Strategic Plan to foster Immigration to Francophone minority Communities to attract, settle and retain at least 4.4% of French-speaking immigrants outside of Quebec.



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