

The Municipal Interest in Immigration

While municipal governments have no constitutional responsibility for immigrant selection, settlement and integration, new immigrants live in local communities and interact with municipal services immediately upon arrival, including social and health services. It is in the interest of municipal governments to develop welcoming communities to ensure newcomers are able to support themselves, contribute to the local economy, and contribute to their new local communities.

As seen in the 2016 census results, immigrants represent the future workforce, bringing with them academic achievements and diverse cultural experiences. The skills and education of these newcomers is a valuable resource to municipalities across Ontario, particularly those with aging populations and workforce outmigration. Immigrants can also enhance social inclusion and wider citizen engagement. Attracting skilled newcomers and helping them arrive in a timely way is more important than ever. Considering that immigration involves all three orders of government as well as community groups and civil society, it is also critical that the process is well planned, coordinated, and managed.

Who Does What

The Municipal Role

Under the Canadian Constitution, immigration is a responsibility shared between the provincial and the federal governments. Municipal governments have local knowledge of support services and employment opportunities, which allows them to inform the provincial implementation of the Ontario's Immigration Strategy and the fulfillment of the Joint Federal-Provincial-Territorial Vision for Immigration. Municipal governments also undertake initiatives to develop welcoming communities and attract immigrants, including managing websites as information portals for newcomers or prospective newcomers, developing newcomer guides, providing loans for education to upgrade credentials, initiating joint municipal government-economic development-chamber of commerce recruitment programs, co-locating and coordinating of settlement agencies, and offering grants to ethnocultural organizations.

The Provincial Role

The Province of Ontario is involved in the settlement of immigrants through the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) in partnership with the federal government through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). OINP is an economic immigration program designed to help Ontario meet its labour market and economic development priorities. The program allows Ontario to nominate, for permanent residence, individuals who have the

Key Aspects of Municipal Attraction, Retention and Settlement

Local Immigration Partnership councils (LIPs): AMO worked closely with the provincial and federal governments to develop and implement LIPs. These local networks coordinate services, including with local employers, and work to achieve better outcomes for newcomers.

Local immigration plans and strategies: With the assistance of LIPs, many municipal governments are also developing immigration plans and strategies. Based on collaboration with local economic development agencies, Chambers of Commerce, and Boards of Trade, they include community profiles and labour market research on future skills and job shortages. This knowledge can inform the marketing and communication of opportunities available in the municipality.

Immigrant Employment Councils: Some municipal governments are engaged in employer-led Immigrant Employment Councils designed to facilitate creative solutions to addressing the mismatch between qualified new immigrants and the available job opportunities by increasing the labour market attachment rates for new immigrants in meaningful work in jobs related to their skills, education and profession. Municipalities are key players in these local councils alongside employers, non-governmental organizations, trade unions and academic institutions.

Municipal Immigration Information Online (MIIO): Municipal website portals, made possible through funding from the provincial MIIO program, are another crucial tool to help attract and integrate newcomers. These websites help newcomers to select a community and begin integrating into their new lives.

skills and experience to contribute to Ontario's economy, and assists employers in recruiting and retaining foreign workers. The Province has also developed, and reports on, an Ontario Immigration Strategy, which has three key objectives: attracting a skilled workforce and growing a stronger economy; helping newcomers and their families achieve success, and; leveraging the global connections of our diverse communities to increase our prosperity.

The Federal Role

The Federal government develops the national policy framework on immigration including setting and monitoring national standards and outcomes. It develops overseas settlement programs at the pre-arrival stage, and facilitates settlement partnership modernization within Canada including the funding of LIP councils. The federal government is responsible for the selection and admission of immigrants and refugees to Canada, including both permanent residents and temporary workers. It delegates some shared authority to the Provinces and Territories to operate regionally Provincial Nominee Programs (PNP).

Recent Legislation

In 2015, the Ontario government passed Bill 49, the *Ontario Immigration Act*. The *Act* provides the Minister the ability to establish and govern immigration programs, including greater authority to set targets and apply selection criteria. The *Act* establishes Ontario's role in establishing and funding settlement programs. The Province will continue to enhance funding for immigrant settlement programs where possible and advocate to the federal government for increased investment. The *Act* recognizes municipal governments and employers as important partners with whom to collaborate. It gives the Minister the authority to enter into agreements with municipal governments. AMO supported Bill 49.

Recent Advocacy and Action

In response to the federal government's commitment to receiving Syrian refugees in 2015 and 2016, municipal governments and District Social Service Administration Boards (DSSABs) played, and continue to play, a role in ensuring that their services are accessible to refugees. There continues to be a strong municipal commitment to successfully resettling the refugees, as well as community mobilization to support the new arrivals. Hamilton, Toronto, Mississauga, Kitchener-Waterloo, Ottawa, London, Windsor, Leamington and Peterborough welcomed the majority of the 10,000 publically-sponsored Syrian Refugees arriving in Ontario. In many cases, political leaders and senior municipal administrators took initiative and became directly involved in the settlement process, which worked well and provided them with an introduction into the refugee issue. In some areas, the LIP helped coordinate support to the new immigrants. Many municipal governments allocated significant resources to innovate and adapt their services to work to support the new immigrants.

AMO has also advocated for the importance of municipal engagement in immigration policy and program development, and enhanced funding for immigrant settlement programs from the provincial and federal governments. Other needs such as affordable housing and childcare for new immigrants are also areas that require attention in order to promote successful settlement and integration. AMO looks forward to re-affirming and formalizing the partnership between the three orders of government through the advancement of the new iteration of the Canada Ontario Immigration Agreement.

Key Aspects of Municipal Attraction, Retention and Settlement (cont.)

The Municipal Immigration Committee (MIC): MIC is a tripartite Committee that brings AMO and municipalities to the frontline of immigration discussions with the Provincial and Federal governments. The three orders of government work together to move immigration forward in Ontario by building the capacity to successfully attract, retain and settle newcomers. This is as important as ever to help achieve common federal-provincial-municipal objects where interests align. Through the MIC, municipalities contribute as partners, not merely as stakeholders. The agreement under which the committee was originally established recognized that the partners at the tripartite table participate as orders of government, all with an interest in the outcome of a successful immigration program in Ontario.

The Canada Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA): This agreement outlines collaboration between the federal and provincial governments on the attraction and settlement of immigrants. In 2004, AMO worked together with Ontario and Canada to create Annex F, which ensures that AMO and its members are engaged in immigration program and policy development through the MIC. The COIA expired in 2011, yet the Ontario Minister of Immigration and Citizenship was assigned the development of a renewed agreement in her 2016 Mandate Letter. This work is currently in progress.