



# News Release

For Immediate Release

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## Ministry Settlement Funding for Newcomers Needs Better Oversight: Auditor General

(TORONTO) “Several areas were identified during our audit where the Ministry could improve the quality and level of services that service providers offer to newcomers,” Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk said in her *2017 Annual Report*, tabled today in the Legislative Assembly. As well, of the \$100 million the Province paid community organizations and others to provide services to newcomers in 2016/17, about \$30 million was for services to individuals who were also eligible for similar federally funded services, Lysyk said.

“Given the potential for duplication of services, the Province needs to work more collaboratively with the federal government to ensure it spends public money wisely,” Lysyk said after her Report was tabled. “The recently signed Canada-Ontario Immigration agreement is a starting point toward addressing the recommendation in our report on this issue.”

In the last five years, more than 510,000 immigrants settled in Ontario as permanent residents. Many of them need help getting settled—everything from finding housing and work to accessing health care.

The federal government is the primary funder of newcomer settlement services in this province. However, Ontario also paid service providers about \$100 million in 2016/17 to deliver settlement services to over 80,000 individuals, and language training to more than 68,000 people.

Almost 6,000 individuals also took part that year in bridge-training programs, which help people trained abroad to qualify for comparable employment here. Among bridge training programs completed in the last three years, an average of 71% of graduates found jobs in their field or in a related one. However, some service providers reported fewer than 40% of their graduates found employment.

Other findings in the Report:

- Ministry funding allocations to each of its settlement and integration services are not determined based on a comparison of the relative need for each service. We found funding is not always allocated to the services most needed by newcomers. For example, average enrolment for language training declined in each of the last five years. As a result, the amount spent on language training during the last five years totalled \$24 million less than budgeted. At the same time, funding for the Ministry’s bridge training program has decreased by about one-third even though the majority of individuals who completed bridge training programs found jobs.
- We found that the Ministry did not establish minimum scores for service-provider applicants to be eligible for funding. As a result, the Ministry approved and funded several proposals that scored less than 50% on application criteria. High-scoring new applicants were not funded in order to renew lower-scoring proposals.
- We found that the actual cost per client in the newcomer settlement program and in the bridge-training program varied significantly among service providers, but the Ministry did not compare data reported by providers to assess whether the differences were reasonable. For example, based on bridge training contracts completed in the last three years, the average cost per individual who completed training and found a job ranged from a high of \$106,100 in one service provider’s program to a low of \$3,600 in another provider’s program.

- There were also significant differences between school boards in outcomes for language learners. Results at individual boards ranged from no learners demonstrating progress at one board to 78% demonstrating progress at another. The Ministry did not follow up on these outcomes to see if corrective action was needed.

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