

Chapter 3

Section 3.08

Settlement and Integration Services for Newcomers

Standing Committee on Public Accounts Follow-Up on Section 3.13, 2017 Annual Report

On October 3, 2018, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (Committee) held a public hearing on our 2017 audit of Settlement and Integration Services for Newcomers as administered by the former Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

On June 29, 2018, the Ontario government announced that as part of a realignment, the former Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration would be integrated into the new Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS). In addition, the government announced that the immigration training programs would transfer from the former Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The transfer of these programs was completed in November 2018. Following a realignment between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, effective October 21, 2019, the program area responsible for the bridge training program is now within the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD). The Committee tabled a report on this hearing in the Legislature in February 2019. The report can be found at www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/standingcommittee/standingcommittee.html.

The Committee made 11 recommendations and asked MCCSS to report back by June 2019. MCCSS formally responded to the Committee on June 19, 2019. A number of the issues raised by the Com-

mittee were similar to the audit observations in our 2017 audit, which we followed up on in 2019. The status of the Committee's recommended actions is shown in **Figure 1**.

We conducted assurance work between June 1, 2020, and July 17, 2020, and obtained written representation from MCCSS that effective October 6, 2020, it has provided us with a complete update of the status of the recommendations made by the Committee.

Overall Conclusion

As of July 17, 2020, only 2% of the Committee's recommended actions had been fully implemented, and 27% of the recommended actions were in the process of being implemented. There has been little or no progress on 71% of the recommended actions.

Detailed Status of Recommendations

Figure 2 shows the recommendations and the status details that are based on responses from MCCSS, and our review of the information provided.

Figure 1: Summary Status of Actions Recommended in December 2019 Committee Report

Prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario

	# of Actions Recommended	Status of Actions Recommended				
		Fully Implemented	In the Process of Being Implemented	Little or No Progress	Will Not Be Implemented	No Longer Applicable
Recommendation 1	4		1.5	2.5		
Recommendation 2	4			4		
Recommendation 3	4	0.5	1.5	2		
Recommendation 4	3		1.5	1.5		
Recommendation 5	2			2		
Recommendation 6	1			1		
Recommendation 7	1			1		
Recommendation 8	1		1			
Recommendation 9	1			1		
Recommendation 10	2			2		
Recommendation 11	1		1			
Total	24	0.5	6.5	17	0	0
%	100	2	27	71	0	0

Figure 2: Committee Recommendations and Detailed Status of Actions Taken

Prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommends that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> define what constitutes a successfully settled and integrated newcomer to provide a basis for assessing whether it is meeting its objectives to successfully settle and integrate newcomers; <p>Status: In the process of being implemented by March 2021.</p>	<p>MCCSS advised us that it is in the process of finalizing sample settlement and integration milestones for newcomers, time frames to reach such milestones and a definition of a successfully settled and integrated newcomer. MCCSS has developed sample milestones for areas of integration that include language, education, economics, health, housing and community involvement.</p> <p>MCCSS plans to complete consultations on these milestones, time frames and definition with partner ministries, including the ministries of Health, Colleges and Universities, Finance, Education, Municipal Affairs and Housing, and MLTSD, and to finalize them by March 2021.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assess the needs of newcomers to guide its allocation of funding to the most appropriate settlement and integration services; Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>MCCSS informed us that as of April 2019, all transfer payment funding for settlement and integration programs had been consolidated into one program funding envelope that would provide it with the flexibility to allocate funding based on the demand and need for each of its services.</p> <p>In 2019 MCCSS also completed reviews of its language training program and newcomer settlement program that included an analysis of the demand for each program.</p> <p>MCCSS noted it would use these reviews, along with stakeholder consultations, to determine the future direction of the programs which it plans to redesign and fund by April 2022. MCCSS advised that the redesign process will include an assessment of the optimal mix of services to better meet the needs of newcomers.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement rigorous guidelines and standards to ensure that funding is allocated to the most effective providers of newcomer settlement and integration services; Status: MCCSS is in the process of implementing this recommendation by April 2022, MLTSD has made little or no progress. 	<p>MCCSS advised us that it has reviewed its assessment tools and standards for awarding funding to service providers and has developed new guidelines for the allocation of funding. The new guidelines, which are intended to ensure that funding is allocated to the most effective service providers, establish a minimum score of 60% that service providers must achieve to be considered for new or continued funding. MCCSS expects to finalize and implement these guidelines for use in the spring of 2021, and to allocate funding to service providers under its redesigned programs using these guidelines by April 2022.</p> <p>MLTSD, which is now responsible for the bridge training program, has not made significant progress toward implementing this recommendation. MLTSD indicated that it was in the process of developing a new selection process to allocate bridge training program funding to service providers. MLTSD noted that the selection process will include a minimum required score that service provider proposals will have to meet to be eligible for program funding. MLTSD expects to develop its new selection process by December 2020 and to allocate bridge training program funding using its new selection process in the spring of 2021.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that newcomers are able to access appropriate settlement and integration services when and where they are needed. Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>MCCSS has made limited progress toward implementing this recommendation. MCCSS noted that it has implemented procedures that allow for the tracking of wait lists by individual course. MCCSS has also developed draft wait-list guidelines that are intended to help reduce wait times and improve service access for newcomers. However, MCCSS noted that due to the impact of COVID-19, it is not clear when it will finalize and implement these guidelines.</p> <p>In addition, MCCSS has collected and analyzed information on client barriers and wait lists, based on data reported in 2018/19 by newcomer settlement service providers. However, the Ministry's analysis highlighted concerns about the clarity and reliability of the information collected.</p> <p>MCCSS noted that it expects to address the recommendation to periodically collect relevant information, including information on wait times and barriers to accessing services, and to take corrective action with the redesign of its programs that it expects to complete in April 2022.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommends that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should work with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and the appropriate regulatory bodies, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify barriers to newcomer participation in bridging programs and develop and implement strategies to address those barriers; Status: Little or no progress. • assess labour market demand to determine whether there is a need to either add or reduce capacity in existing bridging programs, or to develop new bridging programs; Status: Little or no progress. • ensure that criteria for funding bridging programs prioritizes both cost-effectiveness and successful outcomes for participants; Status: Little or no progress. • follow up with clients who have completed a bridging program but not found employment in their field; identify the reasons that they have not found such employment, and take appropriate action. Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>MLTSD has made little progress toward implementing this recommendation. MLTSD noted that by the end of 2020 it will develop a monitoring strategy that will allow it to track the outcomes of participants in the bridge training programs it funds. It expects the strategy will help to identify barriers that exist for newcomers' participation and success. MLTSD noted that it plans to consult with stakeholders to help identify barriers to newcomer participation in bridge training programs. MLTSD expects to introduce some changes by the fall of 2021 to improve access to the program. In addition, MLTSD noted that it plans to monitor the new projects it will select and fund in 2021/22 to gather information on whether these changes will improve access and address barriers experienced by immigrants in accessing bridge training programs.</p> <p>MLTSD has not made progress toward implementing this recommendation. MLTSD intends to address this recommendation through the development of a new process to select bridge training service providers. MLTSD noted funding applicants will be required to demonstrate labour market demand. MLTSD intends to use the labour market information collected through this process to make program funding decisions. MLTSD intends to allocate funding to service providers using the new selection process in the spring of 2021.</p> <p>MLTSD has not made progress toward implementing this recommendation. MLTSD intends to address this recommendation through the development of a new process to select bridge training service providers that will include criteria that prioritize cost-effectiveness and successful outcomes for participants. MLTSD intends to allocate funding to service providers using the new selection process in the spring of 2021.</p> <p>To address this recommendation, MLTSD intends to develop performance indicators for the bridge training program. It also intends to put in place mechanisms to track participant outcomes and follow up with individual bridge training program clients, including clients who have completed a bridge training program but have not found employment. MLTSD expects that follow-up with individual clients will begin as early as December 2021, including with clients who have not found employment to help identify the reasons they have not done so.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommends that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement a process for periodically validating the accuracy of service and financial information reported by service providers; Status: In the process of being implemented by March 2022. identify instances when service providers do not meet their contracted service and financial targets, follow up to assess the reasonableness of deviations from targets, and take corrective action when needed; Status: MCCSS has fully implemented the recommendation and MLTSD is in the process of implementing this recommendation by January 2021. periodically review and assess whether significant differences between service provider costs are reasonable, and take corrective action when needed; Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>MCCSS advised us that it has revised all transfer payment agreements for newcomer settlement services and language training to include a requirement for project-specific audited financial schedules in order to provide third-party confirmation of program-specific expenditures. In addition, MCCSS expects to have tools in place to verify the accuracy of service data reported by service providers by March 2021. It intends to fully implement the recommendation and undertake data verification on a sample basis by March 2022.</p> <p>MLTSD introduced a new monitoring strategy for the bridge training program in April 2020. This strategy includes steps that allow the Ministry to validate the accuracy of service information, including on-site visits and reviews of client files. MLTSD expects to fully implement the recommendation and perform site visits and validation of service information by December 2020.</p> <p>MCCSS has fully implemented this recommendation. MCCSS indicated that, effective fall 2018, reporting templates were updated to reflect new procedures designed to support consistent follow-up with service providers who fail to meet targets. MCCSS informed us that for the 2018/19 and 2019/20 fiscal years, it had taken follow-up and/or corrective action in 94 and 52 instances respectively where service providers did not meet contracted service or financial targets. These actions included changes to payments and requests for additional financial and service information to address discrepancies between approved budgets and reported targets.</p> <p>MLTSD introduced a new enhanced monitoring strategy in May 2020 to manage the performance of bridge training program service providers who do not meet employment and licensure outcome targets. MLTSD notes that under this new monitoring strategy corrective action can include reducing targets and/or reducing funds allocated to the service provider. MLTSD expects to take corrective action, where it is required, beginning in January 2021.</p> <p>MCCSS has not yet taken steps to implement this recommendation. MCCSS expects to redesign its language training and newcomer settlement services programs by March 2022. MCCSS advised us that this process will include developing service cost benchmarks relative to service outputs and outcomes to enable assessment and comparisons of costs among service providers. MCCSS plans to initiate cost comparisons in the summer of 2021 as part of its process to select service providers under the redesigned programs that MCCSS expects to begin delivering in April 2022.</p> <p>MLTSD has not yet taken steps to implement this recommendation. MLTSD plans to address this recommendation through the new selection process it is developing to select the bridge training service providers it will fund. MLTSD expects that by March 2021 it will have used the new selection process that is under development to assess the reasonableness of program costs and to select service providers to fund that have reasonable program costs.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> periodically collect relevant information (such as wait times and barriers to accessing services) from service providers, newcomers, and other stakeholders, and take corrective action when needed. Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>MCCSS has taken some steps toward implementing this recommendation, but significant efforts are still required to fully implement it.</p> <p>MCCSS noted that it has implemented procedures that allow for the tracking of wait lists for language training by individual course. MCCSS has also developed draft wait-list guidelines that are intended to help reduce wait times and improve service access to language training for newcomers. However, MCCSS noted that due to the impact of COVID-19 it is not clear when it will finalize and implement these guidelines.</p> <p>In addition, MCCSS has collected and analyzed information on client barriers and wait lists, based on data reported in 2018/19 by newcomer settlement service providers. However, the Ministry's analysis highlighted concerns about the clarity of the information collected.</p> <p>MCCSS noted that it expects to address the recommendation to periodically collect relevant information, including on wait times and barriers to accessing services, and to take corrective action with the redesign of its programs that it expects to complete by April 2022.</p> <p>MLTSD has not yet taken significant action to address this recommendation. MLTSD plans to develop and implement a new information technology (IT) system by the summer of 2021 that will be able to collect relevant information, such as client satisfaction, employment outcomes and barriers to employment, from bridge training service providers and participants. MLTSD also expects to collect information on barriers to participation in the bridge training program. MLTSD expects, by September 2021, to begin collecting the information that it will assess so that it can take corrective action.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommends that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> clearly define the benchmarks and time frames of successful newcomer settlement and integration; Status: In the process of being implemented by March 2021. establish performance indicators and targets that provide sufficient information to help the Ministry measure the progress of newcomers and the outcomes from specific settlement and integration services provided; Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>MCCSS advised us that it is in the process of finalizing sample settlement and integration milestones for newcomers, time frames to reach such milestones and a definition of a successfully settled and integrated newcomer. MCCSS has developed sample milestones for areas of integration that include language, education, economics, health, housing and community involvement.</p> <p>MCCSS plans to complete consultations on these milestones, time frames and definition with partner ministries, including the ministries of Health, Colleges and Universities, Finance, Education, Municipal Affairs and Housing, and MLTSD, and to finalize them by March 2021.</p> <p>MCCSS has not made progress toward implementing this recommendation. MCCSS plans to put in place a performance measurement strategy that is aligned with the settlement and integration milestones it is developing. MCCSS plans to implement a new performance measurement strategy, including establishing performance indicators and targets, as part of its redesign of its programs by April 2022.</p> <p>MLTSD has not made significant progress toward implementing this recommendation. MLTSD is in the process of developing a performance measurement framework for the bridge training program based on a review of the current performance indicators and targets. MLTSD intends to implement a new bridge training performance management framework in phases, starting in 2021/22, with the launch of new bridge training projects funded under the new selection process MLTSD is developing.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consistently monitor the performance of service providers and services to identify and take corrective action where needed. <p>Status: MCCSS has made little or no progress and MLTSD is in the process of implementing the recommendation by January 2021.</p>	<p>MCCSS has made little progress toward implementing this recommendation. MCCSS advised us that it is collecting language training data that will assist it to monitor and assess the effectiveness of language training services. MCCSS also plans to implement a new performance measurement strategy and corrective action processes as part of the redesign of its programs by April 2022.</p> <p>MLTSD introduced a new enhanced monitoring strategy in May 2020 to manage the performance of bridge training program service providers who do not meet employment and licensure outcome targets. MLTSD notes that under this new monitoring strategy corrective action can include reducing targets and/or reducing funds allocated to the service provider. MLTSD expects to take corrective action, where it is required, beginning in January 2021.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommends that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should work with the Anti-Racism Directorate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a protocol for newcomers to report their perceived experiences of racism and discrimination in accessing and using settlement and integration services; and also in accessing employment information and opportunities; <p>Status: Little or no progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use information collected about newcomers' perceived experiences of racism and discrimination to improve settlement and integration services and programs. <p>Status: Little or no progress.</p>	<p>MCCSS advised us that in May 2019 it had established a working group that includes MLTSD and the Anti-Racism Directorate to review the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> existing mechanisms in the reporting of incidents of discrimination both in and outside of government; the extent to which current agencies involved in discrimination and racism reporting can identify and track immigrants specifically in their data; what barriers may potentially exist for immigrants to accessing services; and what are the best practices and protocols in discrimination reporting and data collection processes (including administrative, privacy and legal considerations). <p>MCCSS also noted that it has researched the role of service providers in racism and discrimination reporting, and in tracking and supporting client awareness of mechanisms to report discrimination.</p> <p>However, significant steps remain outstanding toward implementing this recommendation. This includes identifying and assessing options for reporting racism and discrimination, consulting with stakeholders on the feasibility and implementation considerations of identified options and developing an implementation plan for a proposed approach by January 2021.</p> <p>MCCSS has not made progress toward implementing this recommendation. The Ministry expects to develop an implementation plan to report racism and discrimination by January 2021. Once the plan is implemented, MCCSS intends to begin using information collected about newcomers' perceived experiences of racism and discrimination by March 2022.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommends that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should require service providers to assess the language needs of their clientele, and have staff who are proficient in the languages needed.</p> <p>Status: Little or no progress.</p>	<p>MCCSS progress to implement this recommendation has been limited. MCCSS advised us that the newcomer settlement program's funding application process requests service providers to identify the top languages spoken by their clients and to identify the languages in which they propose to deliver services. Accordingly, MCCSS noted that the language of service delivery is built into funding agreements with service providers.</p> <p>However, MCCSS also noted that it does not have a process in place to assess whether service providers deliver services in the languages they indicated they support and whether clients' language needs are met. MCCSS noted that by the end of 2020, it plans to explore opportunities to obtain more information about the measures agencies take to ensure client language needs are met.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommends that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should implement a formal communications strategy, and assess the effectiveness of its communications efforts to determine whether they are meeting the needs of newcomers.</p> <p>Status: Little or no progress.</p>	<p>MCCSS has made little progress toward implementing this recommendation. To date, MCCSS has not developed a formal communications strategy. MCCSS informed us that it collects information on web traffic on its website, including with respect to specific pages. In addition, MCCSS also collects traffic on its social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter. Although MCCSS informed us that it compares year-over-year use of its website and social media accounts, and that these comparisons highlight increased use, MCCSS has not assessed the effectiveness of its communication efforts to determine whether it is meeting the information needs of newcomers.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8</p> <p>The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommends that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should coordinate with the federal government to ensure that provincially-funded newcomer settlement and integration services complement, but do not duplicate, services funded by the federal government.</p> <p>Status: In the process of being implemented by April 2022.</p>	<p>MCCSS signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in December 2017 with the federal government on settlement and integration to establish a framework for working collaboratively on planning, design and delivery of settlement services for newcomers. A joint priority of the MOU is to reduce duplication of services and address service gaps.</p> <p>MCCSS advised us that a mapping of all federal and provincial settlement and integration services across the province has been completed. In addition, MCCSS completed a review of its language training program in September 2019 that identified opportunities to reduce duplication with services funded by the federal government. For example, MCCSS advised us that it worked with the federal government to develop referral protocols to reduce the number of permanent residents who are eligible for federally funded services that are enrolled in provincial language training classes. Under these referral protocols that took effect in February 2020, language assessment centres are to refer permanent residents to federally funded language training on a priority basis. MCCSS noted that it is also planning to gradually increase provincial investment in employment-related language training to support labour market integration and to better differentiate federal and provincial services.</p> <p>MCCSS expects to explore opportunities to further reduce duplication of services where possible through prioritizing funding to agencies that have a strong focus on clients who are not eligible for federally funded services. MCCSS expects to complete this work and fully implement this recommendation with the introduction of its redesigned settlement and integration programs in April 2022.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<p>Recommendation 9</p> <p>The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommends that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should work with other ministries providing newcomer settlement and integration services to survey newcomers about why they have chosen specific federal or provincial services.</p> <p>Status: Little or no progress.</p>	<p>MCCSS has made limited progress toward implementing this recommendation. MCCSS advised us that with the introduction of new referral protocols for language training in February 2020, whereby language assessment centres are to refer permanent residents to federally funded language training on a priority basis, newcomers will also be asked which course (federal or provincial) they prefer and the reasons for their preference. MCCSS will use this information to better understand the factors that lead clients to select a federal or provincial language training program.</p> <p>MCCSS noted that it will assess additional options to fully respond to this recommendation as part of its program redesign process. It plans to have collected sufficient information to respond to the recommendation by the time it introduces its redesigned settlement and integration programs in April 2022.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10</p> <p>The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommends that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should work with other ministries that provide services to help newcomer settlement and integration to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collect information on the number of, and outcomes for, newcomers served, and use this information to assess the degree to which newcomers are settling and integrating; Status: Little or no progress. • identify opportunities to increase the use of services that make a significant contribution to the settlement and integration of newcomers. Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>MCCSS has made limited progress toward implementing this recommendation. In 2019, MCCSS distributed a survey to other Ontario ministries to identify programs and services supporting newcomer integration, and to identify whether the ministries collect information on use of services by newcomers. MCCSS noted that its review of these survey responses identified the need for follow-up consultations with ministries to better understand the programs and whether data collected could be used to understand newcomers' usage and outcomes achieved.</p> <p>MCCSS plans to complete its follow-up engagements with other ministries to develop an inventory of programs that provide services that help newcomer settlement and integration, and an implementation approach to collecting data from these programs, by March 2021. Thereafter, MCCSS will begin to collect information from these programs that it will use to help assess the degree to which newcomers are settling and integrating. MCCSS hopes to be able to assess the degree to which newcomers are settling and integrating as early as the summer of 2021.</p> <p>MCCSS has not made progress toward implementing this recommendation. MCCSS plans to develop an inventory of programs that provide services that help newcomer settlement and integration, and an implementation approach to collecting data from these programs by March 2021. The Ministry anticipates that it will be able to identify opportunities for increasing the use of services that make a significant contribution to the settlement and integration of newcomers by the middle of 2021.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<p>Recommendation 11</p> <p>The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommends that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should evaluate the effectiveness of provincially-funded language instruction for newcomers and ensure the funding is allocated to appropriate and effective language training providers.</p> <p>Status: In the process of being implemented by April 2022.</p>	<p>MCCSS completed a review of its language training program in 2019 to assess the continued need for the program, its effectiveness and to identify opportunities to improve program efficiency and to reduce duplication with federally funded services. MCCSS determined that there is a gap between the large number of learners pursuing language training for employment reasons and the availability of training for the workplace. As a result, MCCSS' review recommended shifting a portion of provincial investments in language training services to employment-related language training.</p> <p>MCCSS is working toward redesigning its language training program, which MCCSS advised will include steps to ensure funding is allocated to appropriate and effective language training providers. MCCSS expects its redesigned language training program to begin delivery in April 2022.</p>