

CIC's Vision 2020: Summary of Provincial Policy Recommendations

Introduction

This summary examines the policy recommendations of various provincial umbrella organizations to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) in regards to the National Settlement Program, which was outlined in the *Vision 2020: National Settlement Conference* held in Ottawa from November 13-15, 2013. In this conference, recent changes to the settlement program were reviewed and future paths of the settlement sector were discussed. This brief will examine the following umbrella organizations' policy responses to the National Settlement Program:

- Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA)
- Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Services Agencies of BC (AMSSA)
- Manitoba Immigrant and Refugee Settlement Sector Association Inc. (MIRSSA)
- Saskatchewan Association of Immigrant Settlement and Integration Agencies (SAISIA)

Five main policy issues were extrapolated from reviewing, comparing and contrasting the responses from all of the organizations:

- Program Eligibility
- Program Evaluation
- Citizenship
- Funding
- Partnerships

Program Eligibility

Expanding program eligibility was a key issue that was brought up by all of the umbrella associations in this review. Across the region, the importance of providing services on the bases of need rather than on an individual's immigration status was highlighted. In particular, the following groups were emphasized throughout the region as requiring access to integration and settlement services:

- Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs)
- International Students
- Canadian citizens, such as naturalized or returning Canadians with limited language skills

Program Evaluation

The Western Region umbrella organizations emphasized the importance of avoiding a national "one-size fits all" settlement policy, as client groups, individuals, and each province possess different needs. However, across the Region, the Western Region umbrella organizations found that there is a need for greater coordination between pre- and post-arrival services. Additionally, the Western Region umbrella organizations also noted the importance of increased collaboration between CIC and provincial governments

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Strengthening immigrant settlement and integration in Western Canada

Citizenship

All of the Western Regional provincial umbrella organizations also recognized the challenges of the current citizenship process. The importance of a plain language, simplified and standardized citizenship process was emphasized, as well as additional support for multiple-barrier clients. In addition, funding for assistance with permanent immigration was highlighted by all Western provincial umbrella organizations.

Funding

Through the financial support from CIC, immigrant-serving agencies are able to provide their services across the country. In order to continue effectively serving clients, the umbrella organizations provided the following three recommendations to CIC regarding funding:

- CIC services should remain free of charge for all clients,
- CIC should examine the efficiency of its funding models, and
- CIC should engage in collaborative research before implementing social impact bonds or social financing tools

In addition, the organizations listed the services that they provide to facilitate the successful settlement and integration of newcomers. Umbrella organizations enable knowledge sharing among multiple stakeholders as well as represent settlement agencies to the federal government. The Western Region umbrella organizations requested that CIC continue to fund their services so that they may continue to contribute to the social and economic integration of newcomers.

Partnerships

Through partnerships with various stakeholders on the municipal, provincial and federal levels, immigrant-serving agencies have been able to provide a wider range of services to their clients. In order to continue effectively serving their clients, the umbrella organizations have recommended strengthening partnerships with various actors through CIC's support and facilitation.

Since labour market initiatives are a federal imperative, employers were unanimously identified as a key partner in providing effective service to newcomers. In particular, the Western Region umbrella organizations recommend that CIC support the settlement sector in developing collaborative partnerships with employers. By engaging employers and creating links between the private sector and the settlement sector, umbrella agencies would be better able to ultimately foster labour market integration and improve the economic outcome of their clients.

In addition, the umbrella agencies noted the benefit of CIC partnering with provincial governments and other federal departments. Through collaboration with provincial governments, CIC could create tailored and coordinated labour market initiatives.

Conclusion

In brief, each umbrella organization in the Western Region is experiencing similar concerns in regards to current settlement policy. The key priorities among the organizations from each main policy area are listed below:

- *Program Eligibility*
 - Temporary Foreign Workers, International Students and Canadian citizens should be included in CIC-funded programs
- *Program Evaluation*
 - Programs should be specifically tailored to each region
 - Improved coordination between pre- and post-arrival services
 - Increased collaboration between CIC and provincial governments
- *Citizenship*
 - Increased funding for citizenship preparation classes and assistance with permanent immigration
 - Simplification and standardization of application process
 - Ensuring multiple-barrier clients receive additional support in obtaining citizenship
- *Funding*
 - Continued funding for knowledge-sharing, federal representation and building sector-capacity
- *Partnerships*
 - CIC should support better linkages between the private sector and the settlement sector

In closing, the aforementioned recommendations reflect the universality of opinion regarding the National Settlement Program among the Western Region umbrella organizations. Federal decisions are impacting provinces in a uniquely similar fashion, and these commonalities should be recognized.

References

All of the data was compiled from the following briefs:

1. Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies. "Vision 2020 Citizenship and Immigration Canada Recommendations: Report for the Alberta Settlement Sector." n.p., n.d. PDF.
2. Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Services Agencies of BC. "Vision 2020 National Settlement Conference BC Sector Briefing Notes." n.p., 7 November 2013. PDF.
3. Manitoba Immigrant and Refugee Settlement Sector Association Inc. "Vision 2020 Report for CIC from the Manitoba Settlement Sector". n.p. 13 December 2013, PDF.
4. Saskatchewan Association of Immigrant Settlement and Integration Agencies. "Saskatchewan Settlement Sector Recommendations: Vision 2020 National Settlement". n.p., n.d. PDF.