



# WELCOMING OTTAWA WEEK

## *June 25 to 30, 2013:*

## BACKGROUNDER (Q&A)

### ***Q1: What is the genesis and rationale of the WOW?***

Welcoming Ottawa Week was initiated by OLIP to respond to two broad priorities of [Ottawa's Immigration Strategy \(OIS\)](#), launched in June 2011. The first priority is to create multiple opportunities and pathways for all Ottawa citizens to connect intellectually and socially in order to achieve a cohesive civic culture that draws on the creativity of all residents to develop a diverse, vibrant, and cosmopolitan city (*2<sup>nd</sup> Priority under 'Integration Capacity Development'* - OIS, page 55). The second priority is to draw attention to Ottawa's flourishing diversity and to strengthen the City's competitive advantage, allowing it to attract new residents and capital from around the world (OIS, page 37).

Newcomers are attracted to diverse, vibrant cities where they feel that they, and their families, will have an opportunity to participate in city life, to contribute economically, and achieve a sense of belonging.

### ***Q2: What are the objectives of WOW?***

Prospective newcomers are attracted to diverse and vibrant cities where they perceive that they will have opportunities to participate, contribute and belong. In response to these two priorities, the Welcoming Ottawa Week aims to achieve three objectives:

1. To create a cohesive civic culture in Ottawa through recurrent and inclusive sports, cultural, and intellectual activities that bring together newcomers and long-time residents of Ottawa in quality-based intellectual and recreational interactions; one which inculcates a sense of belonging to immigrants and ethno-cultural minority communities
2. To enable Ottawans to express and reflect on the warmth of our welcome to new immigrants by creating opportunities to showcase successes and to discuss challenges
3. To promote Ottawa (nationally and internationally) as a diverse and vibrant national capital that can attract new residents and investments

### ***Q3: What shape will WOW take?***

Welcoming Ottawa Week was conceived as to include six principal elements, as follows:

1. Learning events, such as academic seminars reflecting on our challenges and opportunities in attracting and integrating immigrants
2. Sports events in neighborhood parks in Ottawa, featuring sports that are favored by immigrants and minority populations such as soccer, cricket, running initiatives, and Tai Chi
3. Immigration Forum, showcasing and celebrating the successes of the OLIP partners and enabling community dialogue on how to remove barriers in immigrants' integration
4. Artists events and various entertainments reflecting immigrants and minority communities' artistic contributions
5. Documentary and film screenings in neighborhood parks intended to bring together neighbors to reflect on different aspects' of immigrants' integration – to create empathy for the experience of the newcomer
6. Formal events (galas) bringing together local civic, economic, and religious dignitaries

### ***Q4: Who is involved in WOW?***

Welcoming Ottawa Week was initiated by the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership (OLIP), a collaborative community initiative designed to strengthen Ottawa's capacity to welcome immigrants and improve integration outcomes related to economic, social, political, and civic participation. The WOW is also championed by the Mayor of Ottawa.

OLIP is a broad-based partnership of key local institutions in Ottawa, including the City of Ottawa and Local Agencies Serving Immigrants (LASI), the four local school boards, universities and colleges, health and social service providers, the Champlain Local Health Integration Network, children and youth service providers, employers and employer associations, such as the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, the Ottawa Police Service, Ottawa Community Housing, and the United Way Ottawa.

The WOW activities target all Ottawans in their various roles and relationships with newcomers as neighbours, co-workers, employers, educators, representatives in parliaments/city council, religious leaders, civil servants, artists, and as members of the media.

### ***Q5: How will the Mayor's proclamation make newcomers feel more welcome and valued?***

The proclamation of Welcoming Ottawa Week by the Mayor of Ottawa will help to galvanize Ottawa's leadership and mobilize key institutions to work harder to make Ottawa a welcoming city. This includes employers, educators, government agencies, voluntary sector workers, religious leaders, and the public at large.

The proclamation will make newcomers feel appreciated and proud to be living in the City and giving to it.



## ***Q6: To what extent do the Ottawa Immigrants feel (or not feel) welcome?***

The integration process is challenging. Immigrants must find suitable housing, obtain employment, arrange schooling for their children, try to get their credentials and experience recognized, and develop supportive social networks. This takes time and a huge effort. The length and difficulties of the journey to full integration varies and is based on factors like age, education, language proficiency, cultural distance, family status, and pre-existing relationships with local residents.

Fortunately, many Ottawans value and welcome immigrants and assist them daily in their integration process. Our goal is to create more opportunities and appetite among Ottawans to welcome newcomers and help them meet the challenges they face. This collective expression of welcome would:

- create a more unified community, featuring greater trust and understanding among residents;
- create champions to advance the goals of Ottawa's WOW and to make local successes more visible;
- make immigrants, both new arrivals and those who have been here for a long time, feel more welcome and better able to participate in building Ottawa's future;
- improve our City's reputation at the national and international levels as an attractive, diverse, cosmopolitan city where diversity thrives and newcomers are welcomed.

## ***Q7: How do we tell if Ottawans are welcoming newcomers properly?***

Three broad categories of indicators will tell us about how welcoming we are. Those categories include the levels of engagement in newcomer integration of governments and local institutions, residents' welcoming attitudes to newcomers, and the integration results of newcomers in accessing barrier-free employment opportunities, housing, social services, education, health care, public transit and safe communities.

## ***Q8: Ottawa has a long tradition of welcoming refugees from Vietnam, Kosovo, Somalia, Rwanda, Burma, etc. What's changed?***

Three things have changed:

1. The flow of newcomers to Ottawa has broadened considerably and now includes substantial numbers of skilled workers and international students.
2. Ottawa is seeing large numbers of Francophone immigrants who were originally destined to Quebec. Some of these immigrants may still live in Quebec but they work in Ottawa.
3. The motivation of Ottawans for welcoming newcomers is no longer primarily confined to humanitarian assistance. Ottawa is interested in recruiting newcomers in order to boost local prosperity and stimulate local investment.

## ***Q9: How many newcomers do we have per year?***

Ottawa received a total of 12,000 newcomers in 2012 split equally between permanent residents and temporary migrants. The latter category includes equal proportions of temporary foreign workers and international students.



## ***Q10: How does this compare with other Canadian cities, such as Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver?***

Ottawa's intake of immigrants, students and temporary foreign workers is in orders of magnitude smaller than that of Canada's three big metropolitan regions. That said, in respect of international students, Ottawa is the fourth largest recipient in the country.

## ***Q11: What makes Manitoba so special? What can we learn from them?***

Manitoba has charted a pioneering role in recruiting immigrants and has enjoyed much success in welcoming and retaining new arrivals. Moreover, Manitoba's population is similar to that of Ottawa-Gatineau and it would appear that overall expenditures on settlement services in the two jurisdictions are close. This would suggest that Manitoba's unquestioned recruitment and retention success could, perhaps, be replicated in Ottawa. Put differently, it would appear that Manitoba's success is driven by strategy rather than spending.

The questions for Ottawa are two-fold:

- What lessons are we able to draw from Manitoba?
- Can similar methods be instituted in Ottawa?

## ***Q12: Why is welcoming newcomers important? What's the value?***

Newcomers are essential for Ottawa's future prosperity, growth and cosmopolitan development. Successful newcomer recruitment and integration requires a combination of government policy and investment, engaged and knowledgeable institutions, and welcoming attitudes.

The bottom line is that unless immigrants and other newcomers are made to feel welcome, they will leave, taking with them their assets and providing no 'return' on Ottawa's investments in training and settlement. Apart from such economic arguments, there is universal agreement that Ottawans want to live in an inclusive and unified city, not one that confines immigrants to separate communities.

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