



SETTLEMENT RESOURCES FOR NEWCOMERS TO SARNIA-LAMBTON AN ASSET AND GAP ANALYSIS

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Settlement Resources for Newcomers to Sarnia Lambton

Overview

The federal government funds settlement agencies to provide assistance to immigrants to Canada so that they can adjust to their new communities. All permanent residents, including refugees and other protected persons, are eligible for settlement services (until they become Canadian citizens). Some temporary residents who meet certain conditions are also eligible to receive specific services (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2025).

Settlement refers "to a short period of mutual adaptation between the newcomers and the host society, during which the government provides support and services to newcomers" (Immigration and Citizenship Canada 2025). Services are intended to help immigrants and refugees tackle challenges specific to the newcomer experience so they may participate in all aspects of life in Canada. This federal program funds direct services under five categories:

- Services that connect newcomers to supports, such as childcare, translation and interpretation assistance, crisis counselling, transportation assistance, and disability supports;
- Assessments of needs and assets, referrals, and personalized settlement plans;
- Resources to inform and orient newcomers to life in Canada, including information about their local community, and to develop the life skills necessary to integrate such as individual and family consultations and counselling;
- Language training, including assessments, classes and informal learning opportunities; employment-related services such as mentoring and networking supports, skills development and training; and
- Counselling to obtain employment and qualifying credentials; and services that link newcomers to their local community including community and cross-cultural activities, mentoring and networking.

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In Sarnia-Lambton, the settlement sector comprises a network of community-based services and organizations that provide support to newcomers as they transition to life in Canada. These services address a range of settlement needs, including housing, employment, language training, cultural orientation, and community integration.

Sarnia-Lambton region settlement agencies work with many groups to deliver services, including translation services, health agencies, and various departments within Lambton County. Over the years, this sector, through the SL-LIP, has produced several resource documents that touch on specific groups such as Ukrainians who arrived in Canada under the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) program and immigrants in rural Lambton County (SL-LIP 2022; SL-LIP 2012).

Identified Needs and Recommendations

This section draws on survey data from two settlement sector organizations: the YMCA of Southwestern Ontario's (YSWO's) Settlement and Integration Services and the Centre communautaire francophone Sarnia-Lambton (CCFSL). The findings reflect the perspectives of organizations that provide settlement services, and offer insight into how policies, funding, and programming can be enhanced to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for all newcomers in the Sarnia-Lambton region.

There is a shared sentiment from both of the settlement sector respondents that immigrants and temporary migrants can access services relatively easily in Sarnia. However, in the broader Lambton region outside of Sarnia, accessing necessary resources is believed to be more difficult for both groups. Both respondents also indicated that there are specific services or supports for migrants that are lacking in the city of Sarnia and in the region of Lambton outside of Sarnia. They further stated that there are specific activities that could be done to better support immigrants and temporary migrants in Sarnia-Lambton.

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In particular, the following needs and recommendations were identified by settlement sector respondents:

- **Expand Funding:** Temporary migrants, refugee claimants, and international students face the greatest barriers to services. Increased funding would enable the delivery of essential programming, including legal aid, healthcare, and language training, to these individuals and migrants in general. It would also allow necessary resources to be purchased (e.g. computers for delivering strong and effective programs) and staff to be trained and supported.
- **Expand the Focus of Support:** International students have received a great degree of focus and support to date. Enrolment of international students, however, is beginning to slow, meaning that they do not provide a stable solution for addressing population declines and labour gaps. As such, specific attention should be given to supporting refugee claimants and protected people, who often excel economically but may otherwise leave the region due to lack of opportunities.
- **Enhance Career-Focused Employment Services:** Programs should be developed to support credential recognition, address underemployment, and guide career advancement to prevent economic stagnation among skilled migrants. As one respondent said, "Employment services focus on "getting a job," but newcomers need support with career advancement so that they do not end up underemployed in survival jobs and not using the skills, abilities, and experience that would benefit our local community."
- **Develop Navigation Aids:** Migrants should be provided with guidance on how to navigate Canadian culture, Canadian work environments, and the various services that are available to them. In addition to training in these areas, a database of services should be developed.

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- **Invest in Transportation Services:** Transportation services and supports should be enhanced/provided so that in-person programming is accessible to all migrants.
- **Increase Affordable Housing Options:** More investments in housing are required to meet the growing needs of migrant populations, especially those facing financial constraints.
- **Improve Staff Training:** Service providers should receive ongoing education on the unique needs of diverse migrant populations to ensure that barriers are recognized and addressed and that services adequately meet the needs of the migrants who use them.
- **Support Community-Wide Education:** Anti-immigrant sentiment should be addressed through public education campaigns and outreach to provide accurate information about migrants and their contributions to the community.
- **Foster Community Involvement:** Migrants and other members of the community should be consulted to ensure that service and activity development and provision is informed by the needs and wants of the individuals most impacted by these services and activities.

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