Immigrant and Refugee Settlement Services

Ontario continues to see a decline in the share of new immigrant arrivals to Canada despite receiving the highest overall number of immigrants of any province or territory. The decrease in numbers is cause for concern for Ontario’s immigrant and refugee serving sector since it will likely result in less federal settlement funding for Ontario region.

The federal government is the biggest funder of immigrant and refugee settlement services. The federal funding formula is based on a rolling average of three years of immigrant arrivals by province/territory. Ontario receives the highest number of immigrants from all provinces and territories. But the decline in Ontario immigrant arrivals, a trend that began in 2001, resulted in significant cuts to federal settlement funding to the province in 2011 and in later years. The Ontario immigrant and refugee-serving sector saw a significant loss of services and programs, job loss, and in some cases the closing of immigrant-serving organizations. Last year, Ontario faced a cut in its funding allocation which was mitigated by the allocation of additional funding for refugee resettlement. At the same time, demand for settlement services increased with the arrival of over 11,000 Syrian and other refugees in the province.

OCASI urges the federal government to review the funding allocation model to ensure funding stability for the sector, thus assuring stability of programs and services and reducing precarious work in the sector.

The data shows that recent immigrants were 3.5% of the total population in Canada in 2016, while 21.9% reported an immigrant background. In Ontario, recent immigrants were approximately 3.6% of the population, while 29.1% reported an immigrant background.