



PEEL-HALTON SETTLEMENT PARTNERSHIPS' EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

IRCC Action Day 2025 Summary Report

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PURPOSE

The annual IRCC Action Day, held on November 6, 2025, brought together IRCC-funded newcomer and immigrant-serving agencies from the Peel and Halton regions for a full-day, in-person collaborative event hosted at Peel Career Assessment Services.

The purpose of the day was:

1. to reflect on shared progress in the past year;
2. consider current challenges and collaborative opportunities; and
3. to look ahead to changes such as the NAARS DNS and sector needs.

The event provided a space for sector partners to align around strategic priorities, exchange updates on coordinated regional initiatives, and explore collective responses to evolving newcomer needs. Core highlights included national policy and program updates from IRCC; presentations on shared wellness navigation and intensive case management initiatives; and facilitated discussions examining systems integration, communications, equity planning, and reconciliation-focused learning.

Overall, the day supported validation of collective sector priorities — including continued digital modernization, NAARS readiness, leadership and workforce development, and culturally responsive service delivery — reinforcing the Executive Council's and partner organizations' shared commitment to collaboration, adaptability, and strengthening integrated settlement pathways across Peel and Halton.

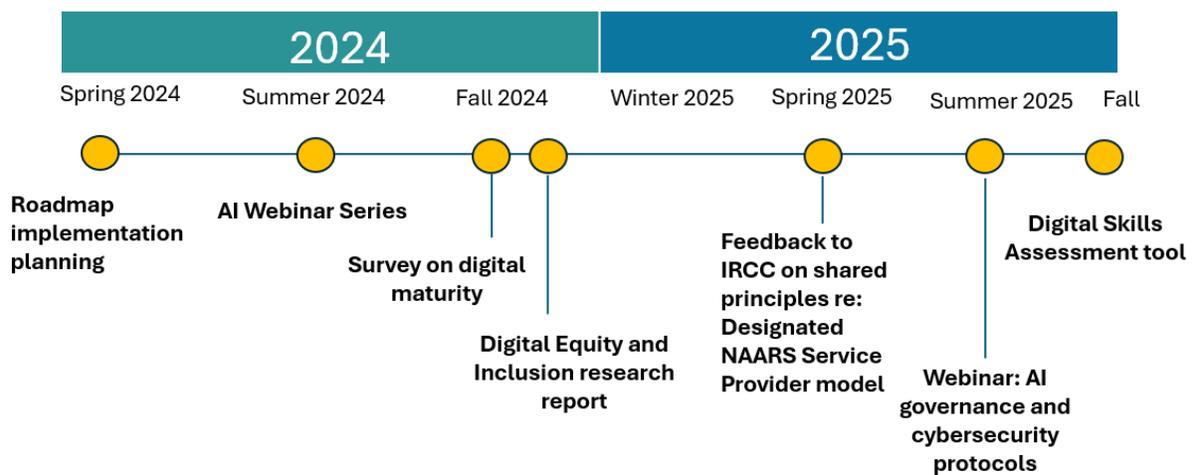
REFLECTION ON COLLABORATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS (2024-2025)

Over the 2024–2025 period, sector partners across Peel and Halton advanced shared priorities focused on strengthening digital readiness and workforce capacity within the settlement system. Through the work of the [Digital Transformation Committee](#) and coordinated professional development initiatives, organizations collaborated to build staff skills, support digital capacity-building, and promote shared learning across the sector.

[Janet Hallett — Chief Program Officer, COSTI](#), speaking on behalf of the Digital Transformation Committee — shared an overview of the Committee’s 2024–2025 workplan and progress, highlighting how its activities have supported coordinated digital capacity-building across the sector.



Digital Transformation Committee’s Workplan (2024-2025)



Key collaborative activities during this period included:

- **Digital maturity assessment:** A sector-wide digital maturity survey was conducted between December 2024 and January 2025 to establish a baseline of organizational digital capacity. A follow-up validation survey administered 6–8 months later enabled organizations to reflect on changes and emerging progress over time;
- **Staff-level digital skills development:** The Committee initiated development of a [staff digital skills survey](#) adapted from the Digital Skills Plus Framework developed by the Canadian Centre for Non-Profit Digital Resilience, supporting organizations to assess internal capacity at the staff level;
 - Service providers are encouraged to use one of the two available digital skills assessment tools to support internal digital capacity-building efforts:
 - [Digital Skills Plus \(DS+\) Self-Assessment Tool](#) – a national benchmarking tool that supports digital-maturity mapping, resource alignment, and sector-wide comparability; and
 - [An adaptable Internal Digital Skills Survey Tool](#) – a customizable option designed to help organizations assess internal digital confidence and skills.

Digital Transformation Committee’s Workplan (2024-2025)

A second area of reflection focused on strengthening **workforce capacity and professional development (PD) for newcomer-serving staff across Peel and Halton**. [Jessica Kwik — Director, Peel Newcomer Strategy Group](#) — shared an overview of coordinated professional development efforts, highlighting how cross-organizational collaboration has supported sector-wide learning and connection.



Key collaborative Professional Development activities included:

- **Coordinated training delivery:** Between April and October 2025, a total of 16 professional development sessions (4 in-person and 12 virtual) were delivered, reaching more than 1,006 newcomer-serving staff across Peel and Halton;
- **Practiced-relevant learning themes:** Training priorities were informed by the 2025–2026 PNSG annual training needs survey (101 responses) and focused on areas such as Indigenous learning and reconciliation, equity and anti-racism practice, mental health skill-building, CRA tax benefits navigation, and human trafficking awareness;
- **Peer connection and shared learning:** In addition to formal training sessions, a **Settlement and Employment Staff Professional Development and Networking Forum in October 2025** was convened to support relationship-building, peer exchange, and cross-organizational learning among frontline staff and managers;
- **Mental Health Community of Practice:** A cross-sector Mental Health Community of Practice was established in 2024, bringing together practitioners from settlement, health, mental health, family services, secondary and post-secondary education, and government. The group meets regularly to share resources and plan collective learning opportunities for newcomer-serving staff. Members also support one another in program design and implementation by offering insights and suggestions grounded in their professional experience and an equity-informed approach. The group will be involved in planning a forum in **Spring 2026** to continue strengthening cross-sectoral networking and learning.
- **Settlement Practitioner Micro-credential:** In 2022, PNSG, in collaboration with Sheridan College, Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services, and the Afghan Women's Organization, developed a Settlement Practitioner Micro-credential for staff in the settlement sector. The program continues to be offered for its fourth year and has transitioned to 100% virtual delivery, providing an opportunity for settlement staff across Canada to participate.

The micro-credential is designed for new staff in newcomer-serving agencies who may lack formal social service education or sector-specific knowledge. It consists of three courses, each eight weeks in duration, delivered over a 12-month period. Graduates from previous cohorts have found the program highly valuable, noting that the practical knowledge, real-life examples, and case studies have been especially helpful in strengthening their work with clients.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES, AND CITIZENSHIP CANADA (IRCC) UPDATE



Stefany Cutuli, Manager, Settlement Network for Peel and Halton at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), provided a system-wide update focused on three core areas:

- (i) settlement service demand trends,
- (ii) funding and program processes, and
- (iii) national policy and program priorities for the coming year.

The update drew on national and provincial data and reflections from recent federal processes.

Settlement service demand and delivery trends

IRCC highlighted sustained operational pressures across Ontario's settlement system, driven by continued demand across multiple service streams and evolving client needs.

High demand across core settlement streams, including:

1. Information and Orientation
2. Needs and Assets Assessment and Referral Services (NAARS)
3. Language Training
4. Community Connections
5. Language Assessment
6. Employment related services

Evolving demand within **Francophone service delivery** was also highlighted, including increased uptake of French settlement services and notable growth in airport reception supports for Francophone newcomers.

Funding and program processes

Reflections from the most recent Call for Proposals (CFP) survey highlighted key process learnings relevant to future funding rounds, including:

- simplifying and enhancing application supports;
- improving consistent application of GBA+ and EDI frameworks;
- increasing transparency and efficiency within negotiation processes; and
- better aligning CFP timelines with sector planning cycles.

(i) National Policy and Program Priorities

IRCC provided an overview of national policy considerations guiding Settlement Program delivery, including immigration levels planning, Budget 2025 priorities, and ongoing Settlement Program renewal.

(a) Immigration levels plan and budget 2025 context

IRCC provided an overview of immigration levels planning and Budget 2025 priorities relevant to settlement programming.

- **Immigration levels planning continues to reflect:**
 - strong admissions targets across economic, family reunification, and refugee/humanitarian streams;
 - gradual increases in Francophone admissions targets outside Quebec.
- **Budget 2025 priorities highlighted include:**
 - expanded technology integration within settlement programming;
 - review of settlement program eligibility parameters;
 - reassessment of housing support allocations;
 - modest adjustments to health programming; and
 - streamlining internal federal service delivery systems.

(b) Settlement program renewal – policy direction

Within this context, IRCC outlined key policy directions guiding the ongoing renewal of the Settlement Program.

- **Priority areas guiding program renewal include:**
 - renewal of the federal digital strategy to support consistent, technology-enabled service delivery;
 - enhanced collaboration with provincial and territorial governments to strengthen cross-system alignment;
 - NAARS transformation to support standardized assessments, and referrals;
 - strengthened supports for employment and economic participation;
 - review of settlement program eligibility durations; and
 - national alignment of Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) service delivery.

IRCC noted that implementation of these priorities is occurring through phased stages as program renewal progresses.

(c) NAARS Transformation – implementation update

An update on the phased implementation of NAARS (launched in April 2025) within the context of ongoing Settlement Program renewal.

- **Current implementation activities include:**
 - rollout of the National Standardized Assessment Tool (NSAT);
 - establishment of sector Communities of Practice; and
 - creation of the National Advisory Table.
- **Longer-term objectives toward 2028 include:**
 - national standardization of assessment practices;
 - improved inter-agency referral quality and service coordination;
 - introduction of Designated NAARS Service Providers (DNS) in major urban centres; and
 - adoption of a standardized settlement plan tool across the national system.

(d) Francophone integration pathway – service delivery expectations

IRCC reiterated service delivery expectations under the Francophone Integration Pathway including:

- informing eligible clients of French-language service options;
- confirming language preference during intake processes;
- referring clients to designated Francophone service providers; and
- maintaining and strengthening local partnership networks that support Francophone settlement pathways.

(e) Ongoing sector engagement – national advisory committees

IRCC highlighted ongoing engagement with sector partners through national advisory and coordination bodies.

- **National advisory and coordination committees include:**
 - National Settlement and Integration Council (NSIC);
 - Settlement and Integration Policy and Program Committee (SIPPC); and
 - Settlement and Integration Service Delivery Committee (SISDC).
- **National coordination meetings scheduled for early 2026 will focus on:**
 - literacy and pre-CLB training approaches*;
 - case management service models;
 - settlement programming in smaller and rural centres; and
 - Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) Initiative – L’initiative des travailleurs et des travailleuses d’établissement dans les écoles (TÉÉ).

*Achev will be hosting the upcoming **National Settlement Coordination Meeting: Language Literacy**, scheduled for February 24–25, 2026. For further information, feel free to contact lanliteracyevent@achev.ca.

DISCUSSION: SETTLEMENT AND RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM RENEWAL INITIATIVES



In response to reduced funding, lower immigration levels, and evolving client needs, participants reflected on how Settlement and Resettlement Programs may need to adapt in the coming years. Following the IRCC update, participants engaged in facilitated discussions led by Devanand Maharaj — CEO, Peel Career Assessment Services Inc., and Kim Jenkinson — Executive Director, HMC Connections.

Key areas of focus for Program Renewal

The overall objective **for renewing** the Settlement Program includes identifying **initiatives** where services can be **optimized** in the **short-term** as well as **longer-term changes** that will be implemented over multiple phases. There are several **key themes** guiding the work:

- Renewed digital strategy
- Supporting skills for economic success
- NAARS Transformation
- Aligning RAP service delivery
- Revising length of eligibility
- Collaboration with PTs

Participants expressed broad consensus that the proposed areas of focus appropriately captured the scope of program renewal. Building on this shared understanding, discussions then moved into three in-depth table conversations focused on:

- (i) a renewed digital strategy;
- (ii) NAARS transformation (including standardization and DNS); and
- (iii) revisiting the length of client eligibility for settlement services.

The following summarizes the key insights shared during these discussions:

A Renewed Digital Strategy

- Participants noted uneven digital capacity across the sector, with no consistent or standardized digital approach currently in place;
- Strong support for expanding digital settlement services, capacity was seen to vary significantly by organization;
- Larger organizations were described as having stronger digital infrastructure and greater capacity to manage privacy, cybersecurity, and client data protection, while smaller organizations often face resource constraints;
- Service providers currently rely on a wide mix of tools — from internal systems and email to WhatsApp, AI tools, and chatbots — resulting in varied practices and levels of risk; and
- Effectiveness of digital services depends heavily on clients' digital literacy and access to technology. While examples such as employment-related chatbots were viewed as promising, there was clear agreement that any digital expansion must remain digital-first but not digital-only.

NAARS Transformation (Standardization and DNS)

- Discussions around NAARS transformation were characterized by uncertainty and a strong call for greater operational clarity;
- Participants raised concerns about interactions with existing funding models, organizational targets, and client eligibility criteria;
- Additional concerns included perceived bias in the selection of lead or hosting organizations, potential competition affecting collaboration, and the need for clearer timelines and phased implementation;

- Participants sought clarity on scenarios such as client self-referrals, inter-regional mobility, referrals to non-IRCC-funded programs, and whether a national database is envisioned;
- Strong interest in a centralized regional coordinating entity — not directly involved in service delivery — to support governance, trust, and coordination; and
- Clear guidance was also seen as essential to support Anglophone–Francophone referrals without negatively affecting organizational targets.

Revising Length of Client Eligibility for Settlement Services

- Participants broadly agreed that a single eligibility timeframe does not reflect diverse client realities;
- The first one to three years post-arrival were consistently identified as critical, while a five- to seven-year outer range was viewed as reasonable if flexibility is built in for vulnerable populations; and
- Participants emphasized the importance of stronger early triage, increased pre-arrival awareness of settlement services, and alignment with digitization and standardized assessment processes.

SHARED INITIATIVES: WELLNESS NAVIGATION AND CASE MANAGEMENT

This section highlights five initiatives shared by partner organizations that support newcomers with complex needs across the Peel and Halton region. While varying in scope and delivery, the initiatives collectively demonstrate how service providers are strengthening wellness navigation, case management, and coordinated support within the settlement system.

Table 2 provides a concise snapshot of each initiative’s focus, geographic coverage, eligibility considerations, and referral pathways, and is intended to support system awareness and coordination among direct service providers. **Please note:** *Information reflects updates shared by participating organizations during the session and is intended to support awareness and referral navigation. Program details and contacts may change over time.*

TABLE 2: Snapshot of Wellness Navigation and Case Management Initiatives (Peel–Halton)

Initiative Type	Organizations Involved	Geographic Coverage	Program Description	For Referral / Contact
Wellness Navigation	Halton Multicultural Council (HMC)	Halton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with COSTI, delivers education and awareness through virtual, group-based sessions supporting Permanent Residents and Convention Refugees to navigate the healthcare system, dental care plans, and mental health resources, while building connections and confidence in navigating life in Canada • Two weekly group sessions are offered: Tuesdays (5:30–6:30 pm) and Thursdays (11:30 am–12:30 pm). • As of October 2025, the program has delivered 66 group sessions, reaching over 675 clients. 	Noor Afroz — nafroz@hmconnections.com

Initiative Type	Organizations Involved	Geographic Coverage	Program Description	For Referral / Contact
Well-Being Navigation Activities	Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS)	Peel (Brampton, Malton)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides wellbeing navigation for clients eligible for IRCC-funded services, with a focus on helping individuals access and understand the Canadian health and mental health care system, and prioritizing clients with complex or higher-needs situations Supports clients through information on health services and coverage, understanding the roles of health care providers, referrals and connections to health, social, and settlement services, appointment preparation, community outreach, and group information sessions 	External referral form to be filled out and sent to settlement intake — intake@pchs4u.com 416-459-8941
Case Management and navigation Services	Centre Francophone du Grand Toronto (CFGT)	Peel-Halton region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides family-centred case management and navigation for vulnerable newcomer families, including Permanent Residents and Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs), experiencing complex settlement challenges. Delivers holistic integration support through psychosocial assistance, coordinated referrals, and system navigation in collaboration with settlement and health partners, supporting families to build stability and resilience in Canada. 	Referrals through settlement and partner SPOs; warm referrals and coordinated intake

Initiative Type	Organizations Involved	Geographic Coverage	Program Description	For Referral / Contact
Case Management Program	Building Multicultural Communities (BMC)	Peel-Halton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides comprehensive, coordinated case management for IRCC-eligible newcomers (non-GARs) experiencing persistent and multiple barriers, including Permanent Residents, Protected Persons, and Convention Refugees. Delivers needs assessment, service navigation, referrals, and ongoing follow-up, with support typically provided over 12–18 months, based on client needs. Clients must be assessed through NAARS; individuals scoring 9 or higher and demonstrating persistent multiple barriers may be referred for case management eligibility assessment. 	<p>Client identified by a partner organization can be submitted through BMC Case Management Form</p> <p>Program Manager: Ashraf Jassani T: 905-790-8482 M: 416-574-8439 Email: cms@bmccentre.org</p>
Case Management for GARs	Polycultural Immigrant & Community Services	Peel-Halton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides coordinated case management for Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs) experiencing complex settlement needs, supporting access to settlement, health, housing, and social services through collaborative service planning and follow-up. Delivers intensive, multi-sector coordination aligned with the needs of GAR clients navigating multiple systems during and following the RAP period. Eligibility is based on NAARS for GARs assessment: RAP SPOs administer the NAARS while clients are receiving RAP services, and newcomers scoring 9 or higher across Class 1 and Class 2 indicators may be referred for case management eligibility assessment. 	<p>Referral should be initiated by RAP SPO following NAARS for GARs assessment</p> <p>Program Contact: Nadia Sokhan — nsokhan@polycultural.org</p>

SPECIAL RECOGNITION – EFFAT GHASSEMI



A special recognition was extended to Effat Ghassemi in honour of her retirement and long-standing contributions to the settlement sector.

During the session, partners acknowledged Ms. Ghassemi's leadership and service at the Newcomer Centre of Peel, as well as her sustained engagement within the Peel–Halton settlement system. Her work was recognized for supporting newcomer settlement and integration efforts over many years, including collaboration with sector partners across programs and initiatives. The recognition marked her contributions to the sector and her role in advancing coordinated settlement supports.

FINDINGS FROM THE DAY

What services and supports are most critical to meeting newcomer needs in Peel and Halton amid shifting sectoral priorities, and how are sector partners aligning to strengthen them? In the afternoon, participants were engaged in rotating, facilitated table discussions focused on four broader sector priorities:

- (A) Best practices on gender-based analysis, anti-racism plans
- (B) Collaboration on current state mapping re: coordinated access and current referrals through existing systems
- (C) Communicating the Impact of Newcomers and Newcomer Services in Communities
- (D) Learning Goals and Coordination to Meet Truth and Reconciliation Actions

These discussions were designed to surface current practices, challenges, and opportunities for continued collaboration among settlement and community partners across the Peel and Halton regions.

The summary below highlights key insights from these discussions, including challenges and opportunities to strengthen future coordination and collective impact across the regional settlement system.

A. Best practices on gender-based analysis, anti-racism plans

Participants were asked to reflect on the approaches, policies, and frameworks guiding GBA+ and anti-racism planning within their organizations, as well as the successes, challenges, communication practices, and opportunities for collaboration. Discussions around the table highlighted:

- **Range of equity and anti-racism approaches policies and procedures are currently in place, some of the mentioned ones are:**
 - [Peel District School Board \(PDSB\)](#): developed a comprehensive anti-racism policy framework, including [Anti-Racism Policy ARE200](#), and [Equity and Inclusive Education Policy \(ARE201 / Policy 54\)](#), supports district-wide equity goals and anti-racism commitments across both staff and students;
 - Ministry of Education programs has many programs and policies in place,

- supporting anti-racism goals across the school systems
- [Afghan Women Association \(AWO\)](#): engaged an external consultant to revise internal DEI policies into more focused frameworks to identify gaps in training and inform future action
 - [Caledon Community Services \(CCS\)](#): completed DEI training, engaging settlement partners in the community, and reviewing policies with broad staff contribution; and
- Participants **identified both progress and ongoing barriers in implementing GBA+ and anti-racism frameworks:**
 - **Progress / successes**
 - integrated DEI action planning across organizations;
 - targeted mentoring initiatives (e.g., Black youth mentoring; Big Brothers Big Sisters cultural mentorship models); and
 - staff composition increasingly reflecting community diversity, contributing to stronger client engagement (anecdotally)
 - **Ongoing challenges**
 - persistent gap between policy and practice, particularly in larger systems (e.g., schools), where incidents are often underreported;
 - limited accountability mechanisms to ensure consistent implementation;
 - difficulty integrating anecdotal evidence and qualitative insights into formal reporting frameworks; and
 - misalignment between lived-experienced data and funders/IRCC reporting requirements.
 - **Advancing GBA and anti-racism efforts will require stronger coordination across the sector.** Examples discussed include:
 - development of shared, practical tools, indicators, and learning resources to reduce duplication and support consistent equity-informed practice;
 - greater consistency in equity-focused data collection and reporting, with increased flexibility to integrate qualitative insights and lived-experience narratives alongside traditional metrics;

- effective use of systems such as NAARS, where appropriate, to surface clients' assets, needs, and challenges;
- stronger internal needs-assessment processes for organizations not currently using NAARS;
- improved follow-through across clients' settlement journeys through active and ongoing follow-ups;
- adoption and adaptation of culturally responsive service models (e.g., cultural matching between clients and staff); and
- standardized approaches to measuring success, including surveys, feedback tools, focus groups, and direct conversations with service users.

B. Collaboration on current state mapping re: coordinated access and current referrals through existing systems

Discussions around this table were mainly focused on current referral practices, interaction with coordinated access systems, and the potential value of sector-supported mapping to strengthen integration.

- **Referral practices across organizations** are frontline-led and relationship-based, supported by localized tools rather than shared sector-wide standards such as:
 - identified at the frontline through counsellor-led needs assessments;
 - guided by internal protocols, referral forms, MOUs where required;
 - depended on locally maintained partner lists or databases;
 - where internal French-language capacity is unavailable, established Francophone referral pathways are routinely used (though referral to IRCC-funded Francophone services is required under the Francophone Integration Pathway policy);
 - tracking of referrals is often partial and uneven. OCMS is used where applicable; otherwise, follow-up depends on individual case-worker effort and informal partner confirmation; and
 - referrals function where staff relationships and warm hand-offs are strong; however, effectiveness deteriorates with waitlists, staff turnover, outdated service information, transportation barriers, and repeated client intake across systems.

- **Organizations interact regularly with multiple coordinated access and navigation systems**, with frequency varying by clients need:
 - commonly referenced systems include employment platforms (e.g., WCG in Peel, FedCap in Halton), language assessment (HARTS), sector-wide information tools (211, Settlement.org), skilled trades portals (Apprenticesearch), and needs-based referrals such as food banks and furniture banks;
 - usage ranges from daily to as needed, depending on client demand and staff role;
 - coordination is enabled primarily through client consent processes and direct staff-to-staff communication; and
 - key gaps include limited interpretation of support within hospital-based coordinated access, uneven prioritization of newcomer housing needs within emergency housing systems, and limited integration between NAARS, housing pathways, and other sector systems.
- **System improvement** identified were:
 - use centralized NAARS to improve referrals (leverage technology e.g. AI);
 - maintaining and improving resources to keep service/resource listing up to date (211, Settlement.org, etc.); and
 - targeted, sector-guided consultant support project (perhaps through the NAARS Community of Practice process) to map and align current referral pathways, identify gaps, and integration opportunities.

C. Communicating the Impact of Newcomers and Newcomer Services in Communities

Participants discussed effective ways to communicate the impact of newcomers and newcomer-serving organizations, particularly how stronger sector-wide coordination could build public confidence and foster inclusion amid growing public concern about immigration. Emphasis was placed on the need to more strategically highlight newcomers' positive contributions across the Peel and Halton regions.

- **Current communication practices were described as varied and multi-channel, shaped by organizational capacity, target audiences, and community context.**

Approaches commonly used by service provider organizations (SPOs) include:

- *digital and social media platforms*: use of Facebook, Instagram, and organizational websites to share newcomer success stories and promote programs;
 - *community-based outreach*: Relationship-based engagement in trusted community spaces (e.g., Community Connection Corners in barbershops) to reach communities that may be less active online;
 - *visual and lived-experience storytelling*: Use of real client photos, videos, and speakers with lived experience to enhance authenticity, trust, and emotional connection among clients, staff, and the broader community;
 - *program and service impact reporting*: documentation and sharing of service activities and outcomes (e.g., employment initiatives and community-based programming) through both digital and print formats to demonstrate impact;
 - *targeted outreach and community engagement*: publications and outreach materials that amplify newcomer voices (e.g., bi-annual *Student Voices* magazine featuring ESL learner stories, annual reports narrating client journeys, materials shared with MPs and provincial bodies), alongside community-based events such as newcomer days and summer camps.
- **Effectiveness of communication efforts** is most commonly assessed through various informal and inconsistent manner depending:
 - levels of client engagement and participation;
 - inquiries from newcomers, including pre-arrival interest; and
 - informal feedback from community members, partners, and residents.
 - **Several challenges to effectively communicating newcomer impact** were identified, including:
 - diversity of funding sources, which can complicate alignment and unified messaging across SPOs;
 - persistent public misconceptions about newcomers and service use; and
 - media narratives that tend to emphasize challenges over positive contributions.

- **Looking ahead participants identified opportunities to strengthen sector-wide communication and public confidence**, including:
 - sharing communication best practices across SPOs to support consistency and reduce duplication;
 - maintaining a client-centred approach within performance measurement and reporting frameworks;
 - more deliberately leveraging SPO success stories within IRCC-led or national communication efforts;
 - coordinating communication across organizations and sectors to reflect collective contributions; and
 - expanding the use of visual storytelling to humanize impact and deepen public engagement.

D. Learning Goals and Coordination to Meet Truth and Reconciliation Actions

Participants were asked to reflect on their organizations' relationships with Indigenous communities and to identify learning goals that support meaningful Truth and Reconciliation. Across discussions, reconciliation was consistently framed as an ongoing, relational process, shaped by trust, learning, and sustained engagement rather than one-time training or compliance-driven activities.

- **Relationships with Indigenous communities** were described at varying stages of development, ranging from early or emerging connections to more established relationships supported through learning initiatives, partnerships, or engagement with Indigenous facilitators. Noting the depth of these relationships is commonly influenced by organizational capacity, access to Indigenous-led resources, and opportunities for sustained engagement.
- **Strengthening indigenous connections** was identified as a beneficial next step for improving understanding around Indigenous histories, perspectives, building staff cultural humility, and creating opportunities for shared learning supporting both newcomers and Indigenous communities.
- Discussion around the **organizational learning goals** emphasized:
 - need to move beyond awareness-level training toward learning that deepens understanding; and

- Importance of supporting respectful engagement in practice.
- **Learning priorities** discussed included:
 - access to Indigenous-led, locally grounded learning, including experiential and place-based approaches;
 - development of ongoing learning pathways, rather than standalone training sessions; and
 - clearer connections between reconciliation learning, staff roles, and service delivery contexts.
- **Reflection on how learning is currently integrated into organizational practice** highlighted that the learning is most commonly embedded through—staff onboarding, facilitated workshops, and internal learning circles; however, these efforts were noted as often episodic and resource-dependent, with limited time for reflection amid operational demands. Therefore, the **opportunities for strengthening coordination included:**
 - shared or joint learning initiatives across organizations;
 - sector-wide learning opportunities to support consistency and reduce duplication; and
 - leveraging existing sector tables and partnerships to align efforts and share resources.
- Participants **emphasized the importance of leadership commitment and dedicated resources** to support the integration of reconciliation learning into organizational culture over time. Examples discussed included:
 - Indigenous representation at decision-making tables, trainings;
 - reviewing and reflecting on the current practices of land acknowledgements / settlement scripts to ensure authenticity, meaning, and reflection rather than procedural use;

- IRCC-led initiatives and funding to advance collaborations;
- embedding reconciliation learning within organizational policies and mandatory staff training; and
- curating and mobilizing accessible learning resources to promote settlement-staff's self-directed learning goals (e.g., [Robert P. Joseph: "21 Things You Didn't Know About the Indian Act"](#)).

RECOMMENDATION AND STEPS AHEAD

Based on discussions, updates and facilitated activities findings, the following near-term next steps were identified:

- **NAARS Community of Practice (CoP):** Service providers across the Peel-Halton region will receive further updates regarding the NAARS Community of Practice (CoP), including information around implementation timelines, participation details, and next steps.
- **Ontario Sector Representation on National Advisory Committees:** In response to sector interest, IRCC agreed to share details regarding Ontario sector representation on National Settlement Advisory Committees which can be found in the **Appendix B** of the report
- **Executive Council – Continued Collaboration:** The next Executive Council meeting, tentatively scheduled for March 2026, will support continued alignment on shifting sector priorities and provide a forum to identify additional areas for collaboration in response to evolving settlement system needs.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Action Day Agenda

IRCC Action Day 2025

Thursday, November 6, 2025

8:30 am – 3:20 pm

Purpose: To bring together IRCC-funded settlement agencies in Peel and Halton:

1. To reflect on progress in the past year;
2. Consider current challenges and collaborative opportunities; and
3. To look ahead to changes such as the NAARS DNS and sector needs.

Coffee and tea and light refreshment Visit table displays on SDIs/ LIPs, Canadian Hearing Services	8:30 am – 9:00 am
Welcome and land acknowledgement EC cochairs (<i>Kim Jenkinson and Dev Maharaj</i>) Warm welcome Roots, DPCDSB, new members	9:00 am – 9:15 am
Music presentation (<i>Kim Jenkinson</i>)	9:15 am – 9:30 am
Review of collaborative work together - <i>Digital transformation committee (Janet Hallett)</i> - <i>Staff support and professional development (PNSG)</i>	9:30 am – 9:50 am
IRCC update (Stefany Cutuli)	9:50 am – 10:10 am
Overview of two shared initiatives (<i>Kim Jenkinson and Dev Maharaj</i>) - <i>Wellness navigation (HMC, PCHS and CFGT)</i> - <i>Case Management (BMC and Polycultural)</i>	10:10 am – 11:00 am
Break	11:00 am – 11:10 am
IRCC Program Renewal discussion (<i>Kim Jenkinson and Dev Maharaj</i>)	11:10 am – noon
Lunch	Noon – 12:40 pm
Special recognition – Effat Ghassemi (Newcomer Centre of Peel)	12:40 pm – 1:10 pm
Rotating facilitated discussion a. Best practices on gender-based analysis, anti-racism plans (facilitated by designate from Peel Career Assessment Services) b. Collaboration on current state mapping re: coordinated access and current referrals through existing systems (Jessica, Peel Newcomer Strategy Group) c. Communicating the impact of newcomers and newcomer services in communities (Karen / Maribel, Halton Newcomer Strategy) d. Learning goals and coordination to meet Truth and Reconciliation actions (Sweta Thakur / Shriya Seksaria, PNSG)	1:15 pm – 2:30 pm

Break – Coffee/ tea, light snack	2:30 pm – 2:45 pm
Next steps – looking ahead (<i>Kim Jenkinson and Dev Maharaj</i>) - Summary of next steps - Goals for the year ahead - Key actions for next cycle and fiscal year	3:05 pm – 3:20 pm

Appendix B: Ontario Sector Representatives on National Settlement Advisory Committees

National Settlement and Integration Council (NSIC)

The National Settlement and Integration Council (NSIC) is a national body that meets twice a year for information exchange, stock taking, and the sharing of innovative and promising practices among the Settlement Sector, non-government organizations, institutions and other partners, key settlement, resettlement and integration stakeholders, provincial/territorial governments (PTs), other federal government departments (OGDs), and Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). The main focus of the NSIC is settlement and integration policy and programming designed to enhance newcomer settlement outcomes across Canada.

Organization Name	City	Representative	Position	Other (Representation)
ACCES Employment	Toronto	Manjeet Dhiman	Vice President, Services and Strategic Initiatives	Sector Co-Chair
Toronto South Local Immigration Partnership	Toronto	Paulina Wyrzykowski	Director, Toronto South Local Immigration Partnership, St. Stephen's Community House	LIP
La Cité Collégiale	Ottawa	No Rep yet	-	NLAB
YMCA of Greater Toronto	Toronto	Teresa Costa	General Manager, Newcomer Programs	NLAB

Organization Name	City	Representative	Position	Other (Representation)
Centre for Immigrant and Community Services	Toronto	Alfred Lam	Executive Director	OCASI
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)	Toronto	Debbie Douglas	Executive Director	OCASI
Catholic Centre for Immigrants CCI	Ottawa	Myriam Mekni	Executive Director	OCASI
Sault Community Career Centre	Sault Ste. Marie	Adam Pinder	Executive Director	
YMCA of Greater Toronto	Toronto	Veronica Hercules	Manager, Immigrant Services, YMCA of Greater Toronto	Pre-Arrival

Settlement and Integration Policy and Program Committee (SIPPC)

The Settlement and Integration Policy and Program Committee (SIPPC) is a steering committee bringing together Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and representatives of the Settlement Sector that are funded by the Department. Its mandate is to identify emerging trends and issues with respect to the delivery of federal settlement and resettlement services to newcomers and Francophone newcomers, foster welcoming communities, and to facilitate the sharing of promising practices.

Organization Name	Representative	Position
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)	Debbie Douglas	Executive Director
Francophone Immigration	Thomas Mercier	Coordinator
Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs)	Paulina Wyrzykowski	Director
Pre-arrival Settlement Services	Teresa Costa Veronica Hercules	General Manager Manager

Settlement and Integration Service Delivery Committee (SISDC)

The Settlement and Integration Service Delivery Committee (SISDC) is a steering committee for bringing together Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and representatives of the Settlement Sector that are funded by the Department. Its mandate is to discuss and address the administration and service delivery issues in the federal Settlement and Resettlement Programs.

Organization Name	Representative	Position
Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre	Priyanka Sheth	Executive Director
Yes Employment Services	LeeAnne Maille	Chief Executive Director
TNO – The neighbourhood Organization	Ahmed Hussein	Chief Executive Director
Thunder Bay Multicultural Association	Cathy Woodbeck	Executive Director

Needs and Assets Assessment and Referral Services National Advisory Table (NAT)

The Needs and Assets Assessment and Referral Services (NAARS) National Advisory Table (NAT) is a national forum for representatives of IRCC-funded NAARS providers. Its mandate is to provide perspective, strategic advice, and feedback to IRCC on how to successfully transition the delivery of NAARS and improve NAARS service delivery and settlement outcomes for clients across Canada. The NAT will support making NAARS more efficient and effective, focusing on improving client outcomes. It will include providing guidance and direction on the role of Communities of Practice (CoP) and will assist in establishing governance and decision-making mechanisms for the DNS model (where applicable).

Ontario Representatives:

- Centre for Immigrant and Community Services- Large Centre/GTA
- Newcomer Centre of Peel- Large Centre/GTA
- South Essex Community Council- Small Centre/Southwestern Ontario
- YMCA of Southwestern Ontario- Large Centre/Southwestern Ontario
- Kingston Employment and Youth Services (YES)- Medium sized centre/Eastern Ontario
- Centre d'établissement de soutien et d'orientation communautaire (CESOC)- Large/
Medium-size centres/Eastern Ontario/Francophone

Newcomer Language Advisory Body (NLAB)

The Newcomer Language Advisory Body (NLAB) is a national stakeholder forum for ongoing dialogue, exchange of information, and discussion on issues related to settlement language assessment and training for newcomers. The NLAB's main focus is to discuss evidence-based ideas and information, and to provide advice and feedback to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) on the development and implementation of settlement language policies and programming in order to enhance settlement outcome across Canada.

Ontario Representatives:

- YMCA of Greater Toronto Area
- New Language Solutions