

Annual Report
2024
Rapport Annuel



Ottawa Community
Immigrant Services
Organization



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PRESIDENT REPORT



As I reflect on my first year on the Board of Directors and as Chair of the Board, I continue to marvel at the energy and passion exhibited by OCISO staff throughout the entire organization as they support each newcomer to Canada.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to thank our Executive Director, Ms. Mary Roman, and her dedicated staff for their hard work and leadership. I would especially like to thank them for their smiles and laughter every time I visit the offices and I am fortunate enough to get a few minutes of their time.

My first experience with OCISO was, and continues to be, coaching and mentoring of newcomers to Canada looking to contribute to the community through gainful employment and continuous learning. The newcomers' commitment to the core values of adaptability, responsibility, open-mindedness and generosity was exemplified when I first met and engaged with employees and management in my capacity as Board Chair.

OCISO's commitment to management excellence is obvious in all that they do. The focus and drive on a service centred approach to delivering settlement services, combined with the organization's openness to continuous improvement through self-reflection and adoption of best management practices, ensures the stage is set for ongoing success for years to come.

The year was charged with intra-city meetings and exercises to prepare and submit proposals for the federal government's next major funding cycle. For OCISO this included over 60 letters of endorsement with a more structured and transparent approach to funding, efforts to elevate the organizational salary band and employee benefits to reflect market rates for better workplace health and employee retention, with the overall objective of supporting excellence in service delivery. It was truly remarkable to be part of the process.

While 2023-2024 was exciting, next year looks to be equally impressive.

We are embarking on a year-long journey to refresh and re-invigorate our policy suite of HR, Finance and Procedural rules, while we are focusing on resetting our corporate identity under the new Ontario Not-for-Profit legislation. These exercises will set the stage for decades to come.

In addition, we will be exploring our real estate footprint in the community, as we continue to offer and expand our services both virtually and in-person, aiming to better serve newcomers and the community.

It is an exciting time to be at OCISO, and I am fortunate to be there with a visionary Board of Directors, an excellent administration, and committed volunteers, funding partners and stakeholders that all share a common vision - to be one of Canada's leading organizations devoted to helping newcomers make Canada their home.

George Enei | President

RAPPORT DU PRÉSIDENT

Alors que je réfléchis à ma première année au sein du Conseil d'administration et en tant que Président du Conseil, je continue d'être émerveillé par l'énergie et la passion manifestées par le personnel d'OCISO dans toute l'organisation, alors qu'ils soutiennent chaque nouvel arrivant au Canada.

Au nom du Conseil d'administration, je tiens à remercier notre Directrice générale, Madame Mary Roman, et son personnel dévoué pour leur travail acharné et leur leadership. Je tiens tout particulièrement à les remercier pour leurs sourires et leur bonne humeur à chaque fois que je visite leurs bureaux, et j'estime avoir la chance de pouvoir bénéficier de quelques minutes de leur temps.

Ma première expérience avec l'OCISO était, et continue encore aujourd'hui, le coaching et le mentorat des nouveaux arrivants au Canada cherchant à contribuer à la communauté par un emploi rémunéré et un apprentissage continu. L'engagement des nouveaux arrivants envers les valeurs fondamentales d'adaptabilité, de responsabilité, d'ouverture d'esprit et de générosité, a été exemplifié lorsque j'ai rencontré pour la première fois, les employés et la direction, dans le cadre de mes fonctions en tant que Président du Conseil.

L'engagement d'OCISO envers l'excellence de la gestion, est évident dans tout ce qu'ils font. L'accent mis sur une approche de service, axée sur la prestation des services d'établissement à l'installation, combiné à l'ouverture de l'organisation à l'amélioration, continue par l'auto-réflexion et l'adoption des meilleures pratiques de gestion, assure que les bases du succès pour les années à venir sont solidement posées.

L'année a été marquée par des réunions et des exercices intra-municipaux, pour préparer et soumettre des propositions dans le cadre du prochain cycle majeur de financement du gouvernement fédéral. Pour l'OCISO, cela comprenait plus de 60 lettres de soutien, avec une approche de financement plus structurée et transparente, des efforts pour élever la grille salariale organisationnelle, et les avantages sociaux des employés, afin de refléter les taux du marché pour améliorer la santé au milieu de travail, et la rétention des employés, avec pour objectif global de soutenir l'excellence dans la prestation des services. Cela a été vraiment remarquable de faire partie de ce processus.

Bien que l'année 2023-2024 a été passionnante, l'année prochaine s'annonce tout aussi prometteuse.

Nous entreprenons dans un parcours d'un an, pour rafraîchir et revitaliser l'ensemble de politiques en matière de ressources humaines, de finances et de règles de procédure, tout en nous concentrant sur la redéfinition de notre identité d'entreprise, en vertu de la nouvelle législation Ontarienne sur les organismes à but non lucratif. Ces exercices poseront les bases pour les décennies à venir.

De plus, nous explorerons notre empreinte immobilière dans la communauté, tout en continuant à offrir et à développer nos services à la fois virtuellement, et en personne, dans le but de mieux servir les nouveaux arrivants et la communauté.

C'est une période passionnante d'être à l'OCISO, et j'ai la chance d'en faire partie, accompagné d'un conseil d'administration visionnaire, d'une excellente administration et de bénévoles engagés, de partenaires financiers et de parties prenantes, qui partagent tous une vision commune – Devenir l'une des principales organisations canadiennes dont la mission est d'aider les nouveaux arrivants à s'installer au Canada comme chez eux.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

It is with great pride and immense gratitude that I present this annual report, celebrating a year of remarkable growth, transformative advancements, and exceptional accomplishments for OCISO. The 2023-2024 year was marked by a significant increase in immigration, driven by major global developments and ongoing humanitarian crises, which led Ottawa to welcome thousands of new arrivals. Our dedicated team rose to these challenges, providing essential services that have made a lasting impact on our community.

In commemorating OCISO's 45th anniversary this year, we reached an unprecedented milestone by supporting over 16,000 clients. We played a pivotal role in helping them overcome language barriers, find employment, access mental health support, and build crucial networks as they settled into their new lives in Canada. Our efforts have not only enriched the social fabric of Ottawa but have also contributed to fostering a more inclusive and thriving Canada.

Despite our successes, we remain acutely aware of the ongoing challenges faced by newcomers, including financial strain, high housing costs, overstretched infrastructure, and persistent issues related to equity, inclusion, and social justice. To address these challenges, we are committed to supporting our clients by recognizing their strengths, safeguarding their rights, and creating opportunities for successful integration into Canadian society.

This year marked a major transformative journey for OCISO, characterized by several key initiatives. We revitalized our infrastructure and workplaces, embraced digitalization, and focused on change management. These steps have laid a strong foundation for a new era of growth and innovation. Our ambitious Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), aligned with our strategic goals, are set to drive continued progress and excellence.

By working closely with our new Board President, Mr. George Enei, and our dedicated Board of Directors, we have made significant strides toward a brighter future. Together, we are championing an inclusive and transformative recovery that prioritizes the well-being of all. I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to them for volunteering their time, expertise, and effort, and for their unwavering commitment to giving back to the community.

As we celebrate OCISO's 45 years of service, we are guided by Roy T. Bennett's wisdom: "The past is a place of reference, not a place of residence." Our future is shaped by the actions we take today, informed by the lessons of our past. With a clear vision and a committed team, OCISO is well-positioned to continue making a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.

A heartfelt thank you to our incredible funders, volunteers, and staff. Your unwavering support and collective dedication have elevated OCISO to new heights and profoundly impacted countless lives. The success we have achieved is a testament to the hard work and commitment of our entire team, whose efforts have been instrumental in driving our mission forward.

Sincerely,

Mary Roman | Executive Director

RAPPORT DE LA DIRECTRICE ÉXÉCUTIVE

C'est avec une grande fierté et une immense gratitude que je présente ce rapport annuel, célébrant une année de croissance remarquable, d'avancées transformatrices et de réalisations exceptionnelles pour l'OCISO. L'année 2023-2024 a été marquée par une augmentation importante d'immigration, stimulée par des développements mondiaux majeurs et des crises humanitaires en cours, qui ont amené Ottawa à accueillir des milliers de nouveaux arrivants. Notre équipe dévouée a relevé ces défis en fournissant des services essentiels qui ont eu un impact durable sur notre communauté.

En célébrant le 45^{ème} anniversaire de l'OCISO cette année, nous avons franchi une étape sans précédent en aidant plus de 16 000 clients. Nous avons joué un rôle essentiel en les aidant à surmonter les barrières linguistiques, à trouver un emploi, à accéder à un soutien en matière de santé mentale et à établir des réseaux essentiels alors qu'ils s'installaient dans leur nouvelle vie au Canada. Nos efforts ont non seulement enrichi la vie sociale d'Ottawa, mais ils ont également contribué à créer au Canada une société plus inclusive et plus prospère.

Malgré nos succès, nous restons très conscients des défis permanents auxquels sont confrontés les nouveaux arrivants, notamment les difficultés financières, les coûts de logement élevés, les infrastructures surchargées, les problèmes persistants liés à l'équité, à l'inclusion et à la justice sociale. Pour relever ces défis, nous nous engageons à soutenir nos clients en reconnaissant leurs forces, en protégeant leurs droits et en créant des opportunités pour une intégration réussie dans la société canadienne.

Cette année a été marquée par un processus de transformation majeur pour l'OCISO, caractérisé par plusieurs initiatives clés. Nous avons revitalisé notre infrastructure et nos lieux de travail, adopté la numérisation et mis l'accent sur la gestion du changement. Ces mesures ont établi une base solide pour une nouvelle ère de croissance et d'innovation. Nos indicateurs clés de performance (ICP) ambitieux, alignés sur nos objectifs stratégiques, sont destinés à favoriser la poursuite des progrès et de l'excellence.

En travaillant en étroite collaboration avec notre nouveau président du conseil d'administration, Mr. George Enei, et notre dévoué conseil d'administration, nous avons fait des progrès significatifs vers un avenir plus radieux. Ensemble, nous œuvrons en faveur d'une reprise inclusive et transformative qui place le bien-être de tous au premier plan. Je tiens à leur exprimer ma plus profonde gratitude pour avoir offert de leur temps, de leur expertise et de leurs efforts, ainsi que pour leur engagement indéfectible à redonner à la communauté.

Alors que nous célébrons les 45 années de service d'OCISO, nous sommes guidés par la sagesse de Roy T. Bennett: « Le passé est un lieu de référence, pas un lieu de résidence ». Notre avenir est façonné par les actions que nous entreprenons aujourd'hui, éclairées par les leçons de notre passé. Avec une vision claire et une équipe engagée, l'OCISO est bien placé pour continuer à faire une différence significative dans la vie de ceux que nous servons.

Un grand merci à nos incroyables bailleurs de fonds, à nos bénévoles et à nos personnels. Votre soutien indéfectible et votre dévouement collectif ont permis à l'OCISO d'atteindre de nouveaux sommets et d'avoir un impact profond sur de nombreuses vies. Le succès que nous avons atteint est un témoignage du travail acharné et d'engagement de toute notre équipe, dont les efforts ont été déterminants pour faire avancer notre mission.

Sincèrement,
Mary Roman | Directrice exécutive

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



George Enei | President



Mark Zekulin | Vice-President



Saruul Ayurzana | Treasurer



Katya Hodge | Secretary



Corina Barbul | Member at Large



Eric Agyemang | Past President



Rahul Chandran | Director



Fatymah Dido | Director



Victoria Hopkins | Director



Imaan Sandhu | Director

OCISO PROGRAMS



CED Community Economic Development Program

The Community Economic Development (CED) Program delivers comprehensive employability development services tailored to support newcomers in securing employment aligned with their professional backgrounds. Our program focuses on integrating newcomers into Canadian workplace culture, fostering networking opportunities, and developing strategies for career advancement and job retention. Key components of our programming include career mentorship, federal internship opportunities such as the FIN and YESS Mentorship Programs, support through the RAISE Program, workplace language training (WLT), and mentorship under the Ottawa Newcomers Entrepreneurship (ONE) Hub. We also provide credential recognition support, facilitate connections through the Ottawa Connector, offer pre-arrival mentoring, and operate the Immigrant Women Mentoring Network (IWMN). Additionally, we assist internationally trained health professionals through the Federal Credential Recognition (FCR) program.

[Our mentorship model is designed to offer structured support that empowers newcomers on their career journey in Canada.](#)

CP Counselling Program

OCISO's Counselling Program is uniquely equipped to provide counselling services to the immigrant and refugee population in Ottawa. We offer clinical counselling to culturally diverse clients with migration- and culture-related issues, and specialize in assisting survivors of war torture, trauma, political persecution, and imprisonment.

These services are private and confidential. We provide up to six sessions of short-term counselling and referrals. Our services are available in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Farsi, Dari, German, and Czech. Interpretation services for other languages may be available.

[The program provides specific training to interpreters to work with counsellors. Our Clients are immigrants, refugees, refugee claimants, citizens, permit holders, adults, youth and children.](#)



LINC

Language Instructions for Newcomers to Canada Program

OCISO offers free Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC). English language instruction is essential for newcomers to feel at home and be fully productive in their new country. OCISO offers LINC classes at various levels, from Literacy to Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) 7, both full-time in person and part-time online. Landed immigrants, permanent residents, and Convention refugees aged 18 and over are eligible to attend. The LINC program continues to enhance the student experience beyond pure language training through community partnerships, conversation circles with volunteers, and special events.

We provide free, quality childcare for the children of parents studying with us. Our daytime childcare is available for children from 6 months to 6 years.

MLO

Multicultural Liaison Officer Program

OCISO's Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO) Program, also known as Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS), has been providing settlement services at schools since 1991. The MLO program is delivered thanks to OCISO's partnership with Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB), and the Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB). In addition to school sites, MLOs provide support to the Family Reception Centre (FRC) and Family Welcome Centre (FWC), where newly arrived students to Ottawa are first registered. The MLO program contributes to student success, facilitates relationships between schools and newcomer families, supports immigrant parents in becoming familiar with and confident in dealing with the school system, and helps schools create a welcoming environment for immigrant and refugee families. MLOs accomplish their work by providing orientation, daily interventions at schools, outreach, and information sharing.

MLOs provide needs/assets assessments and referrals, settlement plans, case management, orientation about life in Canada and available services, language and cultural interpretation, conflict resolution, advocacy, and help build community connections at schools.

MILO

Multicultural Inmate Liaison Officer Program

The Multicultural Inmate Liaison Officer (MILO) Program provides liaison services for multicultural inmates housed at the Ottawa Carleton Detention Centre (OCDC). MILO acts as a bridge between inmates and OCDC staff, connecting inmates from diverse backgrounds with necessary services such as housing, legal assistance, consumer protection, and mental health support.

MILO also supports the families of inmates by offering culturally appropriate counselling, resources, and information.



Canada Science
and Technology Museum
HOURS OF OPERATION
May 1 to September 1
Open daily
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
October 1 to April 30
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

SIP Settlement and Integration Program

The Settlement and Integration Program (SIP) supports immigrants and refugees in adapting to life in Canada through multilingual and multicultural services. Our settlement staff works closely with community service providers and partners to enhance settlement capacities and make mainstream services more responsive to newcomer needs in Ottawa. Key services provided by SIP include referrals, assistance with immigration documents, legal support, income tax clinics, and programs for seniors.

We also facilitate community connections through the Friends of the Family initiative, offer private sponsorship via the Group of Five program, and provide specialized settlement support for 2SLGBTQI+ clients.

YOCISO Youth Programs at OCISO Program

Youth Programs at OCISO (YOCISO) support immigrant youth aged 13 to 24 in their settlement and integration process. Our mission is to provide accessible, strengths-based programming to help youth develop the skills and mindset needed to overcome challenges and contribute to Canadian society.

We offer programs at elementary and high schools in Ottawa, community health centres, and YOCISO's Newcomer Youth Centre.

STATISTICS

16,060

Clients
served

16,524

Orientation
sessions

10,335

Volunteer
hours

209

Schools
served

674

Volunteers
engaged

45+

Languages
served



Community Economic Development Program

The OCISO Community Economic Development Program (CED) maintains its leading role by offering a distinctive employment coaching and mentorship approach for newcomers in the community. This model has been adeptly tailored to offer enhanced assistance to different newcomer groups, each facing unique needs and challenges as they navigate career restarts in Canada.

In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, OCISO collaborated with the Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS) Society (BC) and the Centre for Newcomers (AB) to introduce a tri-provincial initiative aimed at assisting Internationally Educated Health Professionals (IEHPs) in smoothly transitioning into the healthcare sector. This initiative, spanning British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario, is designed to raise awareness, reduce barriers in the foreign credential recognition process, provide Canadian work experience, and facilitate inter-provincial mobility for health professionals. Acknowledging the indispensable contributions of our Volunteer Workplace Language

Trainers (VWLTs) and Volunteer Mentors is paramount in fostering the economic integration of newcomers in Canada. Over the past year, their commitment and dedication have been pivotal in guiding and empowering individuals through the complexities of settling into a new country. Recognizing the crucial role these volunteers play in our programming, we have implemented various measures aimed at ensuring their sustained engagement and satisfaction. These measures include enhanced personalized check-ins, volunteer recognition through initiatives like OCISO's MentorSpotlight, organizing an annual appreciation event, and providing avenues for peer-to-peer support.

The CED team expresses sincere gratitude to partner organizations and the Ottawa community for their ongoing support, enabling us to continue making a meaningful impact on the lives of newcomers as they integrate into the Canadian labour force.





426

Clients matched with career mentors



521

Employment counselling sessions



133

Clients matched to employment

“
Asiya (Mentor) answered my questions in detail and was very helpful. I felt like I learned a lot. Asiya recommended going into the job market with full confidence utilizing my strong 12 years of experience. She also gave me honest suggestions about the ease/difficulty of getting into product management and how I could do it easily through the Business Analyst’s route. Asiya offered to connect again to evaluate my resume or clarify any further queries or questions I may have which I really appreciate.”

Career Mentorship Client

“
I am working as a medical office administrator with Rideau Medical Centre. It is a part-time job right now and it maybe will be a full-time job after the training period. Thank you for your help and advice. I really appreciate that. The workshops were very helpful for me. They enhanced my confidence and especially, the interview workshop helped me spot my weaknesses and I did well in the last interview.”

IWMN Client



Counselling Program

The OCISO Counseling Program has been instrumental in supporting newcomers as they navigate the complexities of settling in a new country. This year, our dedicated team of Clinical Counsellors and Mental Health Workers provided tailored support to 731 individuals and families, addressing a broad spectrum of needs such as mental health and trauma recovery through 2,627 sessions.

In response to the rising mental health concerns, particularly related to post-war trauma, depression, and social isolation, our team intensified efforts to offer compassionate, culturally sensitive counseling services. We introduced a series of targeted workshops focusing on mental wellness and community integration, ensuring our clients feel supported, understood, and empowered to build their new lives in Canada.

Our commitment to the community was further strengthened by the invaluable contributions of ten dedicated volunteers who provided 792 hours of support, helping to extend the reach and impact of our services.

Our approach is rooted in providing holistic and wraparound support, ensuring that every client receives comprehensive care that addresses their unique challenges and needs. By fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment, we empower newcomers to build resilient foundations for their new lives in Canada. As we continue to adapt to the evolving needs of our community, we remain committed to delivering the highest level of care and support.





731

individuals and families received tailored clinical counselling and mental health support



2627

clinical counselling and mental health sessions given



792

hours were provided by **ten** dedicated volunteers

“ I started my therapy sessions with my counsellor at the OCISO clinic because I needed help with issues regarding my family, marriage, and life in general. Before counselling, I was a little depressed about the old situation that worried me for years, my counsellor has done an excellent job of assessing my situation first by good listening and feedback. I've been guided to re-think deeply in my life situation clarify my problem step by step and address my fears and concerns. To be honest, in my first few sessions, I collapsed and was full of tears. It was very hard for me to recall those past traumatic situations, but I overcame this with the helping hand and guidance of my counsellor. I do respect and appreciate the profession of counselling after my good experience. And I will introduce other people in need to try your professional services. I wish you for every success in your profession and sincerely, hope you can help more people in need in society ”

Counselling's client

“ Thank you so much for the gift of your time during the counseling sessions. Your advice and techniques helped me a lot. May God bless you and the entire team at OCISO. ”

Counselling's client



Language Instructions for Newcomers to Canada Program

LINC provides English language training for adult newcomers, supporting settlement and community integration with classes ranging from literacy to advanced levels. This year, we offered eight in-person full-time classes and two online part-time classes, serving 196 students and caring for 32 children daily in the CNC program.

Our classes actively engaged with the community and partnered with the City of Ottawa, Public Health, YMCA, school boards, and local colleges and universities. We hosted interns from CTESL, TESFL, and ECEA programs and welcomed guest speakers on topics such as water purification, recycling, citizenship preparation, adult high school credits, tax and legal services, tenant rights, and scams.

Fundraising activities included pancake breakfasts, fava bean sales, plant sales, and bake sales. Field trips were organized to the Museum of Nature, Gatineau Park, Mooney's Bay Park, and included snowshoeing excursions. CNC children received dental screenings, and we held a special Mother's Day celebration.

Our dedicated volunteers contributed **871** hours, supporting classes with reading, speaking, conversation circles, computer lab sessions, group projects, and job interview practice. The majority of our clients came from Syria, Somalia, Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Iraq.



580

Individual clients and **85** children from **63** countries



51

Different languages spoken



323



students advanced at least one benchmark level in their language skills, with many securing employment, pursuing post-secondary education, and obtaining Canadian citizenship.



“ - I am happy to see my child happy.

- He already can say your name.

- She is talking more in English.

- Our child is very happy, he repeats everything he learns here at home.

- My child asks to go to school every day and over the weekend.

”

**Parents with children enrolled in
Care for Newcomers to Canada**



MLO

Multicultural Liaison Officer Program

OCISO's Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO) Program, also known as Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) - offers a comprehensive range of services, including language and cultural interpretation through MLOs and interpreters, as well as guidance support. We help clarify and explain children's rights and responsibilities, facilitate conflict resolution, and provide academic support.

Additionally, we offer employment assistance, access to food banks, and organize school fairs. Financial support, housing assistance, and a vision school program are also part of our services. We ensure access to mental health counselling and organize seasonal activities for parents and children. Furthermore, we assist with parent-teacher interviews to foster better communication and understanding between families and schools.

The MLO program and YOCISO conducted the Newcomer Orientation Week (NOW) at Brookfield High School, involving 26 newly arrived students and ten peer leaders. MLO program representatives participated in community tables at the Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB), Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB), City of Ottawa, Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership, community health centers, and Crossroad Children.

The MLO Steering Committee met in February and October to discuss partner feedback and program progress. A collaborative video was produced with Algonquin College students to showcase the program. Professional development opportunities were provided by community partners, including OCDSB, OCSB, City of Ottawa, Connecting Ottawa, CLEO, Newcomer Navigation Network, OCASI, Jewish Family Services, Service Canada, Immigrant and Refugee Mental Health Project, and

Community Integration Network. Best practices of the MLO program in schools were presented at the Metropolis Conference and Community Integration Network. The MLO program hosted a visit from a delegation of the IOM-UN and was nominated by OCDSB for the Community Partnership Award. Additionally, MLO Amy Yan received the 2023 Welcoming Ottawa Ambassador Award for her contributions to the newcomer journey.

We also honor our retiring MLOs, Susana Al Riffai, who served for 23 years, and Susana ULeong, who served for 15 years, for their dedicated service to families at OCDSB and OCSB schools. Thank you to all our MLOs for their invaluable work and commitment to our community.



6695

Clients served



187

Schools served



15746

Orientation sessions



“Honestly, where would we be without its MLOs.”

High school teacher

MILO

Multicultural Inmate Liaison Officer Program

Clients received individual support to connect with their families, lawyers, and various agencies, including the John Howard Society, Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa, Harvest House, and local shelters. Additionally, MILO spent quality time with inmates from the stabilization unit during designated breaks.

MILO also played an active role in the Ottawa Carleton Detention Centre (OCDC) Ramadan program, where his contributions—particularly regarding information on the beginning and end of Ramadan—were greatly appreciated. Clients were referred to the OCISO community reintegration program, the RAJO Project (now the Centre for Resilience and Community Development), the Somali Centre for Family Services, and Ottawa Muslim Family Services.

Settlement and Integration Program

The Settlement and Integration Program (SIP) supports immigrants and refugees, including Permanent Residents, Protected Persons, Refugee Claimants, Naturalized Canadian Citizens, Ministerial Permit Holders, and CUAET visa holders. We offer multilingual and multicultural services to facilitate their successful settlement and integration in Canada. Our settlement staff conducted Needs and Assets Assessment and Referrals (NAARs) to guide the provision of services such as information and orientation, settlement plan development, and referrals to community service providers.

Following NAARs, SIP delivered in-depth information and orientation sessions covering topics like sources of information in Canada, rights and freedoms, Canadian law and justice, important documents, language improvement, employment, education, housing, health, finance, transportation, communication, community connections, citizenship, and interpersonal conflict. SIP activities included community connections through the Friends of the Family initiative, settlement services for 2SLGBTQI+ clients, and outreach services.

We collaborated with partners to provide legal support, income tax clinics, and programs for seniors. Our services were delivered in 21 languages, with the top five being Arabic, French, Ukrainian, Spanish, and Dari, followed by Farsi and Pashto. We served clients both virtually and in-person from our main offices at 1800 Bank St. and 815 St. Laurent Blvd., as well as partner locations like the Family Reception Centre (FRC) and the Newcomer Information Centre (YMCA-YWCA of the National Capital Region). During this fiscal year, the SIP team provided 13,140 services to 4,189 clients. Additionally, in the spring, we offered tax clinics both virtually and in-person to 397 low-income refugees and newcomers.





4757

clients from **122**
countries served



4117

volunteering hours
provided by
79 volunteers



21

different
languages spoken



“ Hello, I am writing to express my profound gratitude for your incredible assistance in completing my permanent residence card application, citizenship application and my application for Canadian passport. I appreciate your amazingly warm reception during the various appointments I had with you. ”

Barrister Alex Akinwande, client

“ Hello, I have been coming to your institution constantly for a year and a half. I would like to thank all of the staff there for their friendly service, and especially my Settlement Counsellor for her cordial approach and help, and I offer my best regards. ”

Ferman Akbas, client

Youth Programs at OCISO Program

Throughout the 2023-2024 fiscal year, YOCISO made a significant impact by serving 3,103 youth participants through 440 group sessions and 1,411 one-on-one sessions for clients aged 12 to 30. These efforts provided tailored services to support the settlement and integration needs of newcomer youth. YOCISO offered a diverse range of workshops and programs, including employment support, in-school and after-school workshops, digital literacy, life skills, homework support, and tutoring. These services are designed to equip youth with the tools needed to integrate into Canadian society.

This year, YOCISO introduced the “YOCISO Soccer Club” in response to high demand for soccer programming. This initiative provided youth with opportunities to engage in outdoor activities, participate in recreational sports, and develop leadership and teamwork skills. The program’s success led to its establishment as a foundational summer program, hosting six sessions with 108 participants in the summer of 2023.

YOCISO also partnered with the City of Ottawa to host the Creative Exchange program, facilitating a generational exchange between youth and seniors. This program, which saw 105 participants, allowed youth to teach skills to seniors and, in turn, seniors to teach skills to youth, fostering harmony between generations.

The “YOCISO Ukrainian Youth Connect” program supported newcomer Ukrainian youth in finding a sense of belonging. This program assisted 152 newcomer Ukrainian youth through 66 workshops, 281 one-on-one interactions, and 40 referrals.

Additionally, YOCISO provided 22 in-school programs this fiscal year, each lasting eight weeks, and conducted 176 in-school program sessions, further demonstrating YOCISO’s commitment to empowering youth and fostering community integration.





3103

clients served



440

Group workshops



252

After school
program sessions

“ In the few months that I was in YOCISO, I learned good training courses, participated in trips and had good experiences, and I suggest my friends to benefit from YOCISO’s programs. ”

Aisha Saadat - YOCISO client

“ YOCISO became my second home once I moved from Ukraine to Canada. ”

Kyra Tusha, OCISO Client



Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program - CELPIP

OCISO is pleased to report on the successful launch and integration of the CELPIP social enterprise initiative, aimed at addressing critical market gaps in Ottawa's standardized language testing services. Recognizing the pivotal role of language proficiency in clients' pathways to permanent residency and citizenship, OCISO became an official CELPIP test centre in December 2023. This strategic decision not only ensures compliance with IRCC standards but also significantly enhances OCISO's ability to support newcomers in their settlement and integration processes.

The introduction of CELPIP has enabled OCISO to diversify its service offerings while remaining steadfast in its mission to serve Ottawa's diverse newcomer population. Beyond fulfilling regulatory requirements, CELPIP represents a new revenue stream for OCISO, reducing dependency on external funding sources and bolstering financial sustainability. This initiative underscores OCISO's commitment to innovation and strategic growth, aligning operational expansion with enhanced service delivery.

Moving forward, OCISO remains committed to leveraging the CELPIP initiative to expand our impact within the community and ensure sustained support for newcomers in Ottawa. The integration of CELPIP into our service portfolio marks a significant milestone in achieving both our social mission and financial independence, reinforcing OCISO's role as a leader in community-driven service provision.

Refugee 613

The most exciting development for Refugee 613 this year came with the launch of the Collective Impact Initiative for Refugee Claimants (CIIRC), an innovative partnership designed to support stakeholders to address the barriers refugee claimants face in accessing services. As the secretariat for CIIRC, Refugee 613 is providing convening, communications, and grant management services. And in 2023, led partners undertaking research, developing a governance model and allocating rapid grants to five community partners. Refugee 613 also continued to foster improved welcome for displaced people through our Stakeholder Committee and the Ottawa Ukraine Working Group, a space for first line staff from multiple agencies to collaborate closely to address emerging challenges for displaced Ukrainians.

Our Newcomer Info Hub continued to address gaps in settlement information nationally by producing more than 150 multilingual information pieces, including more than 60 videos, and adding more than 250 external resources to the Multilingual Info Bank. The Afghan Digital Service continued to provide settlement information and referrals to Afghan newcomers in Dari and Pashto through a private, moderated messaging group on Telegram, serving over 750 members and their families across Canada.

Building on its work since 2020 developing knowledge and partnerships in support of the BVOR program, the ReSpo team worked closely with national partners to design and test an innovative campaign to recruit private sponsors. The It Takes a Local campaign design is the first-ever national marketing strategy for BVOR program and has generated valuable insights into how IRCC can maximize the number of refugees resettled through BVOR.



Financial Statement

	2023 - 2024	2022 - 2023
REVENUE		
Grants	10,189,001	9,508,437
Fundraising and Donations	118,621	42,429
Other Revenue	116,062	46,016
	\$ 10,423,684	\$ 9,596,882
EXPENSES		
Program Expenses	7,852,216	7,179,147
Occupancy	959,881	876,424
Administrative and Related costs	1,354,096	1,297,113
	\$ 10,166,193	\$ 9,352,684
EXCESS REVENUE OVER EXPENSES	\$ 257,491	\$ 244,198
ASSETS		
Cash and Prepayments	2,786,654	2,758,737
Investments	508,248	392,973
Grants and Trade Receivables	915,682	1,005,166
Long Term Assets	383,540	438,200
	\$ 4,594,124	\$ 4,595,076
LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCE		
Bank Debt and Other Payables	2,189,289	2,394,958
Long-Term Debt and Other Obligations	278,369	331,053
	\$ 2,467,658	\$ 2,726,011
CHANGES IN FUND BALANCE		
Fund Balance (Deficit) - Beginning	1,869,065	1,624,867
Excess (Deficit) for the Year	257,491	244,198
Fund Balance (Deficit) - Ending	\$ 2,126,556	\$ 1,869,065
	\$ 4,594,214	\$ 4,595,076



Marion Dewar Scholarship Fund - MDSF

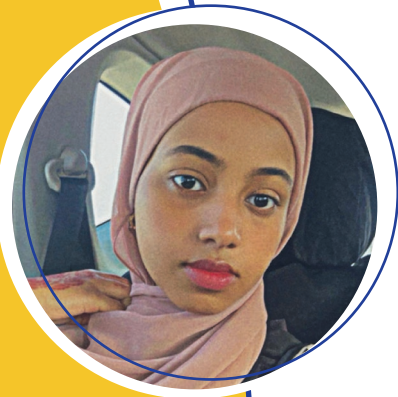
The Marion Dewar Scholarship Fund (MDSF) was established by Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO) in 2009, in honour of the late Marion Dewar, former Mayor of Ottawa. The goal of the scholarship fund is to provide financial support to foster academic and leadership excellence in immigrant and refugee youth. The fund supplements the tuition and supplies required for their post-secondary education in the National Capital Region. Each year, a scholarship of \$1,500 each is awarded to immigrant and refugee youth.

Amani Omer

At the age of 13, Amani arrived in Canada as a refugee from Nigeria. Despite facing numerous challenges, including moving between high schools, language barriers, and adjusting to a new environment, Amani remained determined to achieve her goals. She excelled academically throughout high school, consistently making the honour roll. Amani was also an active participant in her school community, engaging in various clubs, where she worked to create a safer and more inclusive environment for all. Additionally, she volunteered with the CRSD Black Girl support group, helping and supporting newcomers at her school. Amani plans to pursue a degree in Nursing at the University of Ottawa.

Maya Alali

Maya is a Syrian refugee who has been living in Canada for almost two years. She has set her sights on studying medicine, particularly in plastic surgery. She is starting her journey by pursuing an undergraduate premed degree in Biomedical Sciences at the University of Ottawa. She is passionate about helping people feel confident and happy with their appearance and is keen on pursuing a career in medicine. Maya's volunteer work at the Heart Institute's Cardiac Imaging Department and her collaboration with Dr. Small on a study project on Chest CT screening have solidified her aspiration to pursue a medical career. In the future, she plans to establish clinics in different countries.



THANK YOU FOR OUR DONORS!

We are very grateful to our generous donors who continue to step up and support our work. With your contributions, we are able to reach more people and deliver critical services when they are needed.

WITH DEEP GRATITUDE TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!

We are very grateful to more than 670 volunteers who supported us to extend our services into the community, enhancing the settlement and integration experiences of Ottawa newcomers. Our volunteers supported our programming within the Settlement and Integration Program (SIP), Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO) Program in schools, Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program, Community Economic Development (CED) Program, and YOCISO Youth Program. We would like to thank all of you for your continued commitment and service to the newcomer community.



Thank You for Our Funders, Partners and Contributors



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Community Services
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